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[CONSOLATION.]

SHIFTING SANDS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Elgiva; or, the Gipsy's Curse," "The Snapt Link," "The Lost Coronet," etc., etc.

CHAPTER III.

I go to seek my own hearth stone,
Besomed in yon green hills alone;
A secret lodge in a pleasant land,
Whose groves the frolic fairies planned.
Mine arches green the livelong day
Echo the blackbird's roundelay.

"CORR, my poor child, nerve yourself. This is your future home which we are fast approaching. You are brave, proud, gifted. Do yourself justice in your new position and I will take care of the rest."

Sibbald Carew involuntarily took the slender, well-formed hand in his and pressed it with the kindly tenderness of—what? Ah, that was a secret as yet to be developed—a secret that as yet was a mystery to himself in this its early dawn.

The young French girl was at his side in a corner of the post-chaise which he had hired at the old town of Ripon to convey them the remaining twenty or more miles that intervened between it and Carew Manor.

Perhaps the arrangement was made with a deeper purpose than mere convenience. Perhaps Mr. Carew shrank from encountering the prying eyes and gossip of his servants till the final plans for the stranger inmate's future had been made. Perhaps he clung to the last quiet, undisturbed intercourse he would have with the "child woman" as Cora might well be called in her extreme youth and her mingling of simplicity and strength of passion, her Miranda-like inexperience, her Juliet-like devotion and impetuosity.

Cora raised her head, which had drooped on her clasped hands with an abandonment to sorrow and fear that was all new to her high spirit, and an eager flash, like that which Sibbald had seen when he roused her courage and pride at her cottage home, lightened from her eyes.

"I am foolish, weak," she said, with a gesture of

impatience, "but it is all so strange to me. Even my language will be displeasing to your English daughter. She is a lady, I am an obscure foundling. She has accomplishments, and I am ignorant. What can there be in common between us?—no, not even as you intend us to be, an heiress and her humble companion. Yet I will not complain, I will not shrink. I will do my best; only if I fail you will be vexed, you will have repentance for your pity to me—poor Cora."

Mr. Carew was fain to restrain his impulses, or he might have yielded to the passionate desire to draw the beautiful Pariah to his heart and vow to her the protection and the regard of an equal, a guardian rather than a benefactor and a patron.

"I can at least promise not to reproach you, Cora, whatever may be the result of the experiment I am about to try," he said, in tones that had perhaps a tinge of sternness from the constraint he put on his impetuous nature. "It was my own plan and arrangement, and I cannot cast any blame on you for having yielded to my own arguments and persuasions. But you will do all you can to be happy, will you not, my Cora?"

He did not mean, perhaps, that singular phrase, but when he began he dared not finish as he intended, and the "Cora" came rather as an amendment than in the loverlike form it assumed.

She did not note it, her mind was bent on far other and more serious thoughts, and after a moment's pause she resumed the thread.

"Please tell me exactly. Am I to be Miss Carew's servant?" she said, proudly.

"No, decidedly no," he returned, the hot blood mounting to his very brow. "You will be placed in Netta's schoolroom to share her lessons and her sports and recreations; but of course not to expect the equality which no efforts of mine could accomplish, Cora; and when Netta enters the world we shall devise some other plan for your comfort and safety. It will perhaps require courage and patience on your part, Cora, but for my sake you will show your nobler nature, will you not?"

"Yes," she said, "yes. You are my only friend

now. I would satisfy you if I can; if not it matters little what becomes of me. No one would miss or mourn poor Cora."

He did not reply. Perhaps he dared not. And the carriage went on, all too fast it might be for the wishes of those concerned.

For Sibbald Carew shrank with perhaps cowardly instinct from the battle he anticipated. And Cora was like a bather doomed to plunge into a cold deep sea.

But it came at last.

The chaise whirled along a carriage drive all unlike the French girl's impressions or memories of such residences in the land of her childhood.

And then it stopped before a high, wide flight of steps, that led to a broad terrace walk, in the centre of which was the stately hall door of the mansion, carved with ancient devices and bearings of the Carews in former days, albeit little heeded now in these modern days of wealth and luxury.

The domestics waited not for the clang of the hall bell, whose sonorous peal had awakened many a generation of masters and retainers in more rude and uncivilized days; and ere the carriage door was well opened a half-dozen servants were offering their services in different functions.

The baggage, the wraps, those drawbacks of travel, were seized by the well-trained domestics.

Then the door opened, and the steps were let down.

Sibbald handed his young companion from the carriage almost without glancing at the windows facing the spot.

Yet he fancied he could detect a face at the library whose harsh outlines he knew well. And he turned to the graceful girl at his side to draw courage from her transcendent loveliness as he rapidly and defiantly led her up the entrance.

Surely she must conquer all hearts, however hardened against the helpless unknown.

Slowly and firmly he went on, acknowledging as he went the greetings of the line of domestics through which they passed, and catching, as by instinct, their

inquisitive examination of the stranger, who walked calmly and gracefully at his side.

And in a few moments the dreaded goal was reached; the drawing-room door opened, and they stood in the presence of Lady Emily and her niece.

Sibbald was himself now that the crisis was fairly reached.

He touched his sister's brow, and pressed his lips to Netta's fair ones with a kindly dignity and condescending love.

Then he turned to the half-shrinking Cora and led her forward to Lady Emily's chair.

"I have brought you a fresh claimant on your kind cares, Emily, and a welcome addition to Netta's pleasures, as I hope and believe. Cora, my dear, you will ere long be better able to understand and respond to our English ways; till then you must take good will on trust."

Lady Emily Carew was a connoisseur in beauty. Her sharp eyes traversed each feature and line of the new comer with uneasy admiration.

There was no field for criticism, no chance for sneering depreciation.

"Of course your guests are welcome in your own house, brother," she said, extending the tips of her fingers to Cora's tiny palm. "By what name shall I present her to your daughter, Sibbald?"

"That shall be my care, only I hope Netta is too young for such ceremony," returned he, coldly, "but it is soon explained. Miss St. Croix is the name of my new ward, though Cora and Netta sound more girlish and less formal among such young creatures."

"Of course your daughter will be anxious to obey your wishes, brother," said Lady Emily, calmly. "And in a little time we shall all be more acquainted with our new relations to each other. You will excuse Netta if she is not quite prepared for such a change."

"Well, well, I shall only look for a rapid thawing of such needless ice," he returned, impatiently. "Have you given necessary orders for the accommodation of Miss St. Croix, sister?"

"Certainly, to the letter as I hope. Netta, my dear, will you take the trouble to show the young lady the way to her room? Groves will be in waiting if you ring for anything further that may be wanted."

The girls obeyed. A pretty picture they formed as they left the saloon together—the bright blonde in her refined elegance of toilet and the graceful, picturesque brunette, whose simple dress had been provided by Mr. Carew's orders, while passing through London, by experienced professionals in the art of dress, who had carried out to the latter his instructions for his protégée.

"They are lovely girls, are they not, Emily?" said Mr. Carew as they disappeared.

"You need scarcely ask my opinion of our Netta, brother," was the cold reply. "I have yet to learn the history and position of your new guest to form a judgment of her attractions."

Sibbald sat down near his sister for a few minutes without replying.

His features were working painfully, though he averted them from her gaze as far as was possible without challenging suspicion.

"Emily," he resumed, "you are surprised, annoyed at my proceedings in my absence?"

"I have no right to be either," she said, coldly.

"Yes, you have perhaps a claim to feel and express an opinion on all that concerns Netta," he returned. "You have acted as a mother to her since the death of poor Clara. You have been but too indulgent to her, and I, though perhaps from different motives, have shared and countenanced the weakness."

"I really do not understand you, brother," said Lady Emily, haughtily.

"Perhaps not. And it is time we should begin to comprehend each other, if only for Netta's sake," said Sibbald, calmly. "Emily, you at least must remember the past. You must know the one great sorrow that I never forgot. You must know that my heart was buried in the altar, not the grave of my only love."

Lady Emily drew her stately form up with cold dignity.

"Really, Sibbald, I do not think the memories very edifying if I can read your mysterious allusions aright. Perhaps, however, I am mistaken and you will kindly enlighten my darkness."

"Emily, this is affectation or mockery," said Mr. Carew, sternly. "Yet I am sorry to complain when mine has been the error, and you have but striven to atone for its results. You, like myself, have indulged Netta's caprices perhaps for the same ends. She is the daughter of an unloved mother, and I, yes, unnatural that I am, cannot feel for my own child the affection that would have been lavished on her who was my youth's idol."

Lady Emily drew herself up with an indignant frown.

"Sibbald, I am actually shocked, scandalized at your confession. Clara's large fortune relieved you from the difficulties into which your extravagance had plunged you, while Ida Merrick proved mercenary and treacherous in her marriage with another and richer man. And yet you, you, my brother, the father of the loveliest girl in England, can speak in that inhuman, heartless manner of your lost wife and your fair child. I—"

"Peace, Emily!" interrupted Sibbald, abruptly; "you forget that Clara knew I was presumptive heir to an earldom, and that her fortune will descend to Netta when she is married or of age. So I am not so completely her dependent debtor. And, for Ida, Heaven alone knows the mystery of her conduct; it will never be revealed to human being now. The secret was well kept, and we shall never meet again, nor do I ever mention her name save to you, the only friend I have, who knows the sorrow and should not irritate the deep wound."

Lady Emily was somewhat mollified by the homage paid to her superior claims on her brother's confidence, though Netta's injuries still rankled in her fractious, weak nature.

"Well, what has all this to do with your introduction of this young person into your household, brother?" she asked, after a pause.

"They seemed to spring up in my brain, those memories of the past," he returned, thoughtfully. "Something in this young creature's mien, her expression—I know not what—brought Ida's image vividly before me. But it was not that, for the idea is but a fancy, and no real resemblance exists between them. But I meant to explain why I think it will benefit Netta to have a companion who will teach her that she is not born to be an idol; but that others are as fair and more gifted than herself. She is sadly ignorant too. Cora's companionship may stimulate her to more patience and industry. Even in French, in order to converse with the little foreigner, she will be forced to make progress, which she has never yet been induced to do. Am I right, Emily?" he added, half deprecatingly.

"Of course you must be obeyed, brother," said Lady Emily, coldly. "And I can only hope you will not repeat this extraordinary step. May I venture to ask who the girl is?"

"She is an orphan—that is enough," was the abrupt reply.

"Of course you intend her to be restricted to the schoolroom apartments," said the lady, loftily.

"So far, I presume, you will give Netta her natural superiority. I, for one, will certainly decline the responsibility of introducing her without better information than you have vouchsafed to me at present."

"At the age of the two girls such arrangements are premature," he replied, constrainedly. "I shall decide more positively as time goes on. Now I think we may leave the subject, Emily. You understand my wishes, and will respect them?"

Lady Emily bowed coldly.

She knew that Sibbald Carew was not to be safely resisted when that stern tone was assumed; but not less did she maintain her own bitter jealousy and hate of the stranger orphan, not less resolutely did she determine that, if there was power in woman's will and woman's craft, Cora St. Croix should rue the day when she crossed the threshold of Carew Manor.

CHAPTER IV.

An angel stood and met my gaze

Through the low doorway of my tent.

The tent is struck, the vision stays;

I only know she came and went.

And when the room grows slowly dim,

And life's sad oil is nearly spent,

One gush of light these eyes will beam

Only to think she came and went.

"MOTHER, where is she—Cora? How is it she does not welcome me as she was wont to do?"

The speaker was a man of some twenty-two or twenty-three years of age, and with remarkable attractions of person for one in a comparatively humble station in life.

There was nothing plebeian in his bronzed features, which had a sharp and as it might be called aristocratic moulding in their manly type—nothing that could have outraged the most fastidious in the carriage of that well-shaped head, with its clustering tawny hair, that was rather chestnut than auburn, and abundant to a fault in its rich though crisp curls.

No, Rupert Falconer, with his large, full, honest gray eyes, his finely matured figure, and free, agile movements, might well have baffled the most skillful critic to decide either his birth or his profession, albeit the very skin and bearing of the man spoke of daring exposure to Heaven's elements, though without losing the stamp of civilized manhood in the strife with such powerful enemies.

His face and form were such as would stamp themselves on woman's memory.

Little wonder if Cora, the foundling, cherished them in her heart of heart.

Little wonder if Adèle Dufour's passionate nature was wrapt up in the relative on whom she could thus bestow fortune and her own fair self, if he was not ungrateful for the lavish gifts.

But at the moment when he spoke, when the first eager greetings were over, and he glanced anxiously round to find the face he loved best, and catch its shy, eager welcome, its veiled fire of joyful tenderness, he reeled little of the piquant French girl, nor even of the mother to whom he was so dutiful and affectionate a son.

Mrs. Falconer shook her head uneasily.

"My son, she is gone, she left us some weeks since. I hope we can make up for her absence, Rupert, my boy," she replied, in a voice that strove in vain to be as playful as the words with which her answer was constrainedly constructed.

"Gone, mother! Are you playing with me? But surely it is not—Mother, mother, you could not look like that if Cora was dead!" he said, in a hollow voice that sounded strange in its toneless agony.

"No, no, no. What in the world could put an idea like that in your head, Rupert?" said Mrs. Falconer, trying to laugh off her embarrassment. "What superstitious fancies you sailors get hold of, as if there was no way for a young girl like Cora leaving us except for the grave. She is well and I do not doubt happy and prosperous," she added, significantly.

"Do you mean that she is discovered, that her family have claimed her?" asked the young man, speaking with evident effort at a composure he did not feel.

"Well, no—not exactly, but it's as good for her, and we may say for us, Rupert," was the mother's response. "For you see it would have been very difficult for you or us to know what to do with her as she got older, and she would have naturally been obliged to get her own living. And so, as she wished it, and it was for her good, I did not refuse, and she went off as happy and as proud as a queen with her new friend."

Rupert's eyes flashed dangerously.

"What is it you mean? Mother, explain yourself," he said, hoarsely. "What does all this madness mean? Cora had no such changeable temper, she would love for ever when once her affections were touched. It was not in her nature to turn from and desert those she had known from childhood."

"And to whom she owed life, as one may say, and more than life," returned the old lady, sententiously. "But then what can one expect? She is young, and it was a great temptation; the grand gentlemen offered to take her to his home and give her all kinds of good things and provide for her. You cannot be surprised nor hardly blame her, my boy."

"And you mean that she, Cora, went off with a stranger, and that you allowed it! Mother, it was a cruel thing! I could never have dreamed you could have been so inhuman, so unmindful of my life's happiness!" said Rupert, sinking on a chair, as if he had been struck by a cannon-ball. "I can never pardon it, never."

"Now, Rupert, you are just talking like your age," said Mrs. Falconer, in a tone of superiority, "as if I'd not take care the girl was rightly cared for. And I saw it was for the best, for he's a rich English gentleman, will be a great nobleman some day—and, besides, he promised that Cora should have all she could ever want, and I expect he will make a lady of her at last, for he seemed wonderfully taken with her; and he saw her by herself, that there might not be any doubt about what she liked, and I told her to take her choice whether to stay or go. And the end of it was that she preferred to go; and I wouldn't stand in her light, especially as there was no such good fortune to be expected here. There's no one who is at all fit for her near us, and in two years she might expect to be married—even less; you forget that, Rupert."

He had covered his face with his hands, and did not raise them for a moment after she had done speaking.

When he looked up there was a terrible, haggard wanness in his expression that fairly astonished the mother's more shallow nature.

"Mother," he said, "you little know the mischief you have done. I tell you I remember all, ay, too much, far too much for my peace, my very reason. Mother, my brain reels under the blow. I—I loved Cora as my very life-blood, she was to me as sister, love, child, as her who would have been my future wife, the very idol and sunshine of my existence, and you—you talk of its being 'best' of my forgetting everything about her. Mother, you have done ill, you have dealt a death blow to my peace, if not my life and reason."

"Hush, hush, my love—you forget that Adèle is left to you; she is far better suited for your wife, my boy," returned Mrs. Falconer. "She is of your own kin and kin, you know, and has a little dowry that will serve to prevent you working as you have hitherto done, and make you a comfortable home in after days. There, be reasonable, Rupert, if but for the sake of your old mother who has brought you up since you were an infant and never thought any trouble or hardship too much for her only child," she added, plaintively.

The young man shook his head impatiently.

"Mother, this is idle nonsense," he exclaimed.

"Have you always thought like this, or have you forgotten your own youth, that you suppose there can be a change of love, from one to the other, as readily as I could change my ship or your your dwelling? I tell you I do not love Adèle, I never did, I never can love her, and—"

"Hush, hush," whispered Mrs. Falconer as the rustle of a dress announced the approach of her niece, whose advent to welcome her returned cousin had been delayed by the careful toilet she had deemed it necessary to complete.

The next moment the girl appeared.

Mrs. Falconer looked anxiously for some indication whether she had heard the ominous words; but, if she had caught their purport, there was little trace of any emotion on her carefully arranged features.

The bright, dancing eyes, the smile that just parted her lips to display her pearly teeth, and the quick step that so well suited her light figure, all spoke of animated pleasure at the coming greeting.

"Dear Rupert, this is charming," she said, in her clear voice that suited well the piquant language in which she spoke. "Oh, we have been weary while you have been away. I would chain your roving footsteps with some of my lace fetters if they were strong enough," she added, glancing playfully at the countless yards of beautiful lace that were lying in careless profusion on a couch. "But, alas, they lack the power; is it not so, my cousin?"

"I fear so indeed, Adèle," he said, saluting her on either cheek in the national fashion. "And I should be quite unworthy of such graceful fetters even if they would hold such a rough captive. It is a pity," he said, bitterly, "that you did not try them on a fairer and younger wanderer, Adèle."

"Oh, you mean Cora," said the girl, with a shrug of her shoulders that spoke volumes of scorn and disapproval to the susceptible nerves of her cousin. "I assure you I should have been quite powerless to detain her when there were such superior attractions to take her away. But I am grieved, very grieved, for your sake, dear Rupert," she went on, as Mrs. Falconer quietly stole from the room into the adjoining kitchen. "It is a sorrow to you and therefore must be to me," she whispered, gently.

"And not to yourself? Then you did not love—you do not mourn her, Adèle?" he said, sharply.

She was silent, her bright eyes cast on the ground as his penetrating, angry gaze was bent on her face.

"Nay, Adèle. It is not for me to reproach you if it were so," he returned, "only I shall know—I shall guess more of the truth."

"Dear, dear Rupert, what can I say?" she faltered. "If I did not love Cora I could not help it. She was proud and scornful to me, and but for you and my aunt I could not have borne it. But now she has outraged my tenderest feelings. I am indignant for you, Rupert," she went on, more boldly.

"She was tempted, sorely tempted, or she would not have yielded," he said, bitterly, though Adèle fancied she could discern a lingering softness in his look and tone that indicated favourably for her progress in his regard. "Adèle, only think how young she is. You are a woman, she but a child; and this cozening rascal would dazzle her with bright visions and flattering speeches. But he shall be punished; yes, even were it to cost my own heart's blood such villany shall be avenged," he went on, hushing himself up to a kind of frenzy at the ideas conjured up of Cora's faithlessness and the stranger's triumph.

Adèle's brow had a contraction as if a painful spasm seized her at the words.

She would fain have vented the angry pique that every syllable provoked.

She to be contrasted with her more youthful rival, while yet herself but a girl in years—she to be slighted and set at naught for an absent fondling, whose very ingratitude to her benefactors seemed but to deepen Rupert's affection and regret!

Adèle treasured all this up in her heart of heart, to be brooded over and visited on the unconscious object of her indignation at some not distant day.

But not yet—no, not yet. The quick fire of her Gallic spirit must be subdued for the present. She must temporize, and soothe, and endure to all outward seeming.

"It is not for me to school you, dear Rupert," she

said, in a hesitating tone, "and my heart bleeds too truly for you not to answer to every pang you suffer. Yet forgive poor Adèle if she does venture to remind you that Cora had no real links to bind her to her temporary shelter. Do not be too much surprised if she preferred wealth and ease to the comparative hardships of this dear home, which for me has so many charms. Ah, Rupert, if you could but know, if your eyes were less blinded," she went on, in a subdued voice. "But time will show, and I, your little cousin, must submit to the pain and the degradation of seeing you—my noble Rupert—thus deceived."

There were tears in her bright eyes, that rarely had known such visitants, while she spoke, and through the crystal drops glittered such unmistakable love and tenderness toward the sorrowing Rupert, that he would have been more than man to have resisted their influence.

"No, no—do not speak thus, Adèle," he said, taking her hand in his. "You are unjust to me and to yourself. I have always trusted in you as a dear, lovely, precious cousin, and looked upon you as a friend, a sister, who could be relied on for affection and sympathy. But Cora—I confess it—has been to me as the very core of my heart, the idol whom my fancy has dressed in many a bright colour of beauty and love. It is over now—she is gone, unworthy, and I—I will not bear the loss tamely without revenge."

Adèle was sobbing now. Her mingled rage and disappointment vented themselves in a passion of tears, which touched Rupert to the very quick.

"Hush, hush, dear Adèle," he said, soothingly. "This is selfish, cruel of me to move you thus. Come, let us smother the misery," he went on, taking her hand with a wan smile. "We will speak no more of this ingratitude. At least you are left to my mother, and—to me."

And, half unconsciously, his arm stole round her waist and his head rested on her shoulder like a tired child.

It was a good symptom, as she believed, an omen for the future. Rupert turned to her for support and consolation in his grief.

There was but one step between that clinging dependence and love. Cora would lose the heart she had so prized, and Adèle catch it in the rebound. One was a trusting idiot, the other a skilful angler.

So thought the French niece of Mrs. Falconer as she shyly drew back from the involuntary embrace.

CHAPTER V.

One only passion unrevealed,
With maiden's pride the mind concealed,
Yet not less fondly felt the flame.
Oh, need I tell the passion's name?

CORA ST. CROIX was half reclining in the deep bay window of the schoolroom at Carew Manor, her graceful head resting on her hand, her eyes fixed on the prospect, which was becoming familiar to her yet never pallid in its picturesque beauty. She was changed in the few months that she had spent in her new home, but only for the better maturing and softening of her charms. The natural elegance of her form and movements was polished into refinement by the force of content rather than teaching.

The simple dress she wore was girlish and unmarked by one feature of wealth or luxury, but still it was admirably adapted to her slight young form and the extreme youthfulness of her features; and the modiste Sibbald Carew had judiciously employed to furnish her wardrobe had played her part so well as to render the stranger independent of Lady Emily's scant considerations.

Then too the fine eyes, the lovely face were matured into higher and more intellectual thought, and the crude ideas, the quick wit, had sprung like a tropical plant into a sudden growth under the training that was vouchsafed to the stranger.

Yet the despised governess of Netta Carew secretly exulted in the more grateful task of educating the gifted unknown, and even that brief space of time had sufficed to advance the girl to a rare proficiency for such slender advantages as she enjoyed.

Her thoughts, however, were not on the new pursuits that were opening before her view, not even on the strange caprices of her present life, the wayward mood of Sibbald Carew, the cold haughtiness of Lady Emily, nor the selfish petulance of Netta. No, her mind flew to the one magnet which attracted her, the one motive of her actions, to the memory of Rupert Falconer, the preserver of her childhood, the unfaithful friend of her youth, the secret love of her child heart.

"Rupert, it was for you, for you, and you will perhaps hate and despise poor Cora for the apparent ingratitude she has shown. But if he is happy it matters not, and I shall not be his ruin, as she said."

A bitter smile crossed her features as she remembered Adèle, and the gathering twilight scarcely con-

coaled the tears that blinded her dark eyes at the passionate tempest of emotion which the familiar names conjured up.

Was it a dream?

There was a soft step behind her, then a gentle touch on her graceful shoulders as of a hand laid half timidly on the bending form, and a voice sounded in her ears that in that dusky mist and in the abstraction of her wandering thoughts brought a sudden thrill to her frame—a thrill of joy and safety and bird-like happiness, which was but the precursor of fresh dangers and troubles to this lone and nameless wanderer.

"Ah, ma belle cousine," were the words that sounded in her enraptured ears. "Do I see you again after this long absence?"

It was so like the greeting of Rupert Falconer on his return from those weary voyages, during which she had been abandoned to the cold mercies of Adèle and her aunt, that for the moment the impossibility of its recurrence was forgotten. She scarcely realized where she was in that moment of delicious joy, when the sole thought was of him, her young heart's idol.

She started round with a look of such radiant happiness that made her beauty simply dazzling.

The splendid eyes poured forth a whole flood of tenderness in their liquid light, and her lips parted in a smile of exquisite love and sweetness that fairly entranced the new comer on whom the glance was turned, and brought an exclamation of momentary surprise simultaneously with her own cry of disappointed alarm.

"I—I thought," she stammered, in her newly acquired English that sounded more bewitching from the slightly foreign accent, "that—"

"And I thought that I was addressing my young cousin Netta or I should not have introduced myself in so unceremonious a fashion," said the stranger, with a graceful, deprecating bow and a smile that even Cora could not deny had a rare fascination in its half-mocking amusement. "But as I have plunged into the mire I must do the next best thing, to extricate myself from my blunder. May I venture to ask your pardon, mademoiselle, for the involuntary rudeness of Ernest Belfort, commonly called Lord Belfort, and cousin on the maternal side to Miss Carew?"

Cora bowed her head with a deep blush, that only heightened her dangerous charm, as she prepared to leave the spot without farther delay.

"Nay," said the young stranger, in his honeyed tones that accorded well with the expression of his whole features, "I shall not believe in your forgiveness if you leave me so abruptly, while our introduction is, as it were, but half accomplished. Will you not favour me with the name of one who as my cousin's friend will, I hope, deign to become mine?"

He placed himself as she spoke in a position which effectually precluded Cora from passing out of her recess without positively brushing past him, a contact which she shrank from as timidly as the awkwardness of an interview.

"My name is soon told," she said, proudly, like a graceful gazelle driven to courage by being set at bay. "I am only an humble companion of Miss Carew's studios called Cora St. Croix. Now perhaps you will allow me to pass, my lord."

He paused a moment as if in doubt.

He was young and impressionable, but from his position and training more versed in the world's ways than men ten years his senior.

Handsome, high born and the orphan son of a widowed and doating mother, he had passed rapidly on in the world's pilgrimage from boyhood to the feelings and experience of early manhood.

"One moment, Miss St. Croix," he said, with a greater deference than he had yet shown, in a subdued, low tone, that disarmed suspicion and distrust. "I cannot let you go with that cold, proud look of resentful indignation at my involuntary disrespect. The fact was that I have just returned from a rather prolonged tour, and hastened to pay my respects to the relatives I most value next to my own mother. And Netta and I in former days have been wonderful friends, so that I naturally took the familiar way to the old room, and in the obscurity, and presuming that my little cousin might have grown considerably during my absence, I was stupid enough to make the blunder that I yet cannot quite regret. Now will you leave me with a rather kinder forgiveness than you have yet accorded me?" he added, with a pleading smile.

"Yes, yes, there is nothing to forgive," she returned, hastily, "only please let me go."

"Not until you have given me your hand in token of amity," he returned. "Nay, it is no disrespect, no idle fancy," he went on, as she shrank back, "I would but be saved from the self-reproach of thinking you believed mine a nature to offer insult to any woman, and certainly not to you."

Miss St. Croix involuntarily recoiled from the of-

ferred hand, but still the voice and manner were so irreproachably deferential, and she was so timidly anxious to escape, that she hastily gave her own small fingers into his clasp.

He held them for a brief moment in both his. Then, as if by an irresistible impulse, he raised them to his lips.

The touch was light, scarcely perceptible.

But even as the girl snatched them from the momentary caress another figure had joined the group.

The door of the apartment had suddenly and almost noiselessly opened, a light step had bounded forward with the eager impetuosity of girlish nature, and the lips had parted with the first glad greeting of: "Ernest, are you there, hiding from me?" when the sentence was suddenly cut short, and Netta Carew stood dark, angry, petrified as it seemed with rage and astonishment as her flashing eyes caught the sudden gesture which freed Cora's hand from Lord Belfort's grasp.

(To be continued.)

A PRESENTIMENT.—The late Bishop of Winchester on the 6th of January last wrote the following remarkable passage:—"I have a far more sustained sense than formerly of the nearness of the end. Otherwise I cannot say that I feel much older."

The will of the late Lord Westbury has been proved under 300,000*l.* personality. He leaves the present lord the sum of 2,000*l.* per annum, subject to the control of his wife and trustees. The bulk of the property is not to be realized for a term of five years, when disposition is made of it. The will, which was made about six years ago, was drawn by the noble and learned lord's own hand, and, great lawyer though he was, he omitted, we are informed, to appoint executors, though he named trustees.

The Empress of Russia travels in her private train, which perhaps is the most complete and luxurious in the world. It consists of eight saloon carriages and offices, connected by covered passages, and is divided into dining and drawing-rooms, bedrooms, and kitchens. The dining-room has large oval windows, which give uninterrupted views over the country through which the train passes; the drawing-room is an elegant apartment, prettily furnished; and the bedrooms might be those of a comfortable house. The beds are seemingly of the ordinary kind, but are in reality hammocks, which enable their occupants to sleep without sustaining any annoyance from the vibration of the train. Attached to the train are apartments for servants, of whom there are a great number, ranging from butlers to engine-drivers and porters.

COLLIERS' VAGARIES.—The colliers are not only trying to emancipate themselves from the law which dictates we shall earn our bread by labour, but are also altering the outward aspect of man. We are informed that a party of these gentry called at a barber's shop within a hundred miles of Hyde, and before leaving enacted quite a comedy of errors. One of them took his seat on the operating-chair and gave the barber orders to shave his head. The barber punctually attended to his customer. Another had part of his hair cut off, and what was left dyed green. Another had his hair and whiskers dyed yellow; two of them had their moustaches and eyebrows dyed blue, and one had his whiskers shaved off and his moustache dyed white. When the barber had finished their toilet he told them his charge and was paid, and the party left the shop. It is pleasing to pay a high price for coals in order to bring out the latent humour of the labourer in this fashion.

ORIGIN OF PESTILENCE.—The Shah's physician, Dr. Tholozan, recently read an interesting note to the Paris Academy on the origin of pestilence, or bubonic fever, which has long been thought to arise exclusively in the low, hot and marshy regions of the north of Africa and of Asia Minor. Dr. Tholozan proves, by a large number of facts, that this idea is erroneous, and that the disease takes origin in all latitudes and climates, and at all heights. It is not due to climatic or meteorological influences; it is not even the necessary consequence of hygienic influences—*e. g.*, famine, which rather engenders typhus. The exclusion of all these physical causes conduces to the theory that pestilence is an organic fermentation. It is very frequent in Kurdistan, and Dr. Tholozan attributes it in this case to the natives living in contact with sheep in ill-ventilated and unhealthy huts.

THE NEW BISHOP OF WINCHESTER.—Dr. Harold Browne, who is to be translated from the see of Ely to the see of Winchester, is one of those scholarly and moderate divines who would do honour to any Church, and who are free from any passion for embarrassing extremes. After the death of Bishop Wilberforce the fittest successor would be a brilliantly gifted Churchman who has again and again been passed by in favour of ecclesiastics whom it would

be irony even to mention in the same sentence with him. But, on the other hand, no fault can be found with the present appointment. The Bishop of Ely was known to be one of the most distinguished scholars and theologians in the Church long before he was raised to the episcopal bench. The Establishment can boast of few Hebraists, but Dr. Browne is one of the first. After a distinguished university career he was for six years professor of Hebrew at St. David's College, Lampeter. He has also been professor of divinity at Cambridge; and has peculiar claims to be a high authority respecting both the language of the Old Testament and the theology of the New. To theological literature the Churchmen of this generation have made few contributions that promise to be lasting, but Dr. Harold Browne's "Exposition of the Thirty-nine Articles" fills a place of peculiar distinction among the small number. It is a text-book both in this country and America. Many other writings have added to his reputation as a theologian who is at once deeply learned and unimpeachably orthodox. And he is more than a mere scholar, for he did active parish work before he became a bishop, and his episcopal career, if it has not been brilliant, has at least been strikingly free from reproach. It would, perhaps, have been difficult to find a "safer" prelate in all the hierarchy.

THE BLUSHING ROSE.

How beautifully blooms the blushing rose,
Emerging from its robe of lovely green;
How charming, yet how modest, and how sweet,

No wonder it is deemed the garden queen.

Nay, do not blush, sweet rose, but condescend
To raise thy head, since every grace is there:
To all the world thy beauties must be known,
There's none more sweet, more lovely, or more fair.

And yet how transient are thy heavenly charms,
When pluck'd and faded in one single day;
So passeth by the life of lordly man!
No mortal hand the will of Heaven can stay.

How oft alas! some prize what least they trace,
Unheeding of its beauty or its worth;
So long as they can gratify the hour,
They think they're blest with all they need
on earth. J. A.

SCIENCE.

A NEW AND POWERFUL MAGNET.—A magnet of extraordinary carrying power has been constructed by the well-known French physicist, M. Jamin. Whilst artificial magnets have not hitherto been made to carry more than four or five times their own weight, this magnet is able to sustain upwards of twenty-two times its weight. It is constructed of a great number of thin, well-magnetized plates, instead of the thick plates generally employed.

SELF-ACTING PRESERVER-VALVE IN FIRES.—Mr. Stewart's self-acting preserver-valve, for the protection of life and property from fire, is so constructed with fusible metal that when fixed in ceilings, or elsewhere, the heat of an incipient fire melts the fusible metal, and opens the valves, so that streams of water pour out upon the fire to quench it, while the action of the water sets alarm-bells in motion. The object is the protection of buildings of every description, as well as ships.

MINERAL OIL IN AUSTRALIA.—A product of South Australia, just discovered, promises well. Kerosene oil has been made from a substance which exudes from the earth in large quantities at the head of the Coorong. Experiments have been made to test the stuff, which in appearance resembles asphalt, and has been called "caoutchouc." A ton of it yields seventy gallons of kerosene, thirty of lubricating oil, and seven of varnish. Tests have shown that the kerosene will not burn except through a wick, until heated to 152 deg.

STREET WATERING.—The watering of the streets of London is attended with an annual cost of 135,000*l.* It employs 1,500 horses and carts, and an equivalent number of men. A new system is proposed, and is now on its trial, by which, it is said, the work can be done more efficiently, and beyond all question at much less cost. Pipes are to be laid down along the gutters of the streets, and they are to be perforated at intervals, so that when the water is let on little jets of it can be spurted on to the pavement. Thus the watering of the streets can be performed gradually as occasion may require.

SAFETY FROM LIGHTNING.—Mr. Latimer Clark, one of the first electricians in Europe, says "A person reclining on a sofa or bed at a distance from all the walls of the room could scarcely suffer injury, even in a house struck by lightning; but most abso-

lute security is obtained by lying on an iron or brass bedstead, of the form known as the Arabian bedstead, in which the head is surmounted by an iron erection supporting the curtains. A person lying or sleeping on such a bedstead could not possibly receive any direct injury, even if the house were demolished, as his bedstead forms the most complete lightning-protector which could well be devised. A wooden bedstead placed against the wall does not afford any special security."

MINERAL DISCOVERY IN THE ISLE OF MAN.—A rich silver-lead-bearing lode has been discovered at Poolvash, situated in the south of the Isle of Man. A short time ago the owners of this property made some temporary explorations near the seashore, and the result of these trials was highly satisfactory. One part of the lode is composed of gossan charged with rich silver-lead ore, and proved by actual assay to contain upwards of forty ounces of silver to the ton. Within the last few weeks the lode has been traced crossing the country in a northern direction, and the indications at this point are also of a most pleasing description. All the trials in question have not exceeded four feet from the surface, and the length opened on the range of the lode is over a quarter of a mile. It must be gratifying to those concerned that rich silver ore has been discovered throughout the entire distance. In judging from the geological formation of the locality it is the opinion of high authority, and men of vast experience, that a mine of unbounded wealth exists.

PRESERVATION OF FOOD.

M. Sau, of Neuchâtel, is said to have achieved remarkable success in the preservation both of meat and vegetables. His mode of operation is thus described: The meat, etc., is packed in barrels and covered and surrounded with one quarter its own weight of acetate of soda, in the form of powder; in summer the action of the salt is immediate, but in winter it is necessary to place the barrels or other vessels in a chamber heated to 20 deg. Centigrade. The water of the meat is absorbed by the acetate of soda. At the end of twenty-four hours the meat is turned, and in twice that time the operation is finished. The meat may either be packed in its own brine or dried in the open air. If the barrels are not full a solution of one part of the acetate to three of water should be added. When the brine is separated from the meat and evaporated to half its volume, it crystallizes, and half the salt is saved, while the remainder is an excellent extract of meat, which represents, when reduced to a thick paste, 1/3 of the weight of the meat. This extract is added to the preserved meat and is said to restore its original fresh flavour. When the meat is to be used it is steeped from twelve to twenty-four hours in tepid water, containing ten grammes of sal ammoniac to the litre. Fish, fowls, ducks and snipes have been preserved whole in this solution of acetate of soda, the entrails being first removed.

Meat loses one quarter of its weight by the action of the solution, and another quarter if dried. The flesh of warm-blooded animals may be dried with the aid of the stove; but most fish, and especially salmon and trout, can only be dried in the air.

Vegetables are treated in the same way as meat, but they lose five-sixths of their weight, except Brussels sprouts, which only lose three-quarters. When wanted for use, they are plunged in cold water for twelve hours, and are then cooked as if they were fresh. Before the vegetables are covered with the acetate, however, it is necessary to warm them, in order to get rid of their rigidity. At the end of twenty-four hours they are taken out and dried in the open air.

Mushrooms are steeped for twenty-four hours in a solution of equal parts of acetate of soda and water; the solution should be at 30 deg. Centigrade. The mushrooms are finally strained and dried.

Potatoes must be first cooked by steam, and then treated like other vegetables.

M. Sau declares that the same treatment succeeds well with thin-skinned fruits, such as peaches, plums, strawberries, and raspberries; and with thick-skinned fruits, such as apples and pears, provided they are first split or heated through.

All substances prepared by this process, if dried, must be kept from moist air, or they exude; and when exposed to the air, after having been soaked in water, they become mouldy, but do not rot.

The inventor insists strongly on the value of his plan in the case of vegetables, which can be prepared, he asserts, at one-tenth, or even one-twelfth of the cost of preserving them by the ordinary modes in use. Should this system be as effective as the author of it declares it to be, it would undoubtedly be of great importance, and it would be easy to try an experiment in a small way in order to ascertain the effect of the acetate of soda on the flavour of meats and vegetables.



[THE NEGLECTED GRAVE.]

EDITH LYLE'S SECRET.

By the Author of "Daisy Thornton," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XX.

ROBERT MACPHERSON puzzled himself extremely over Gertie's face and its resemblance to another.

"How can they be so like, and yet nothing to each other?" he said.

And once, when an opportunity occurred, he questioned the child closely with regard to her antecedents, but elicited little more information than she had already given Godfrey in his hearing.

"She was Gertie Westbrooke, born in London, January—, 18—. She had lived for a while in a big house, with her mother, whom she could not remember, and who died when she was two years old, and then a new mother came, who was very bad and cross, and Mary Rogers, her nurse, took her away, and had been so good to her ever since."

"And your father?" Robert asked. "Where is he? Do you ever see him?"

"He was bad and cross, too, and drank too much wine," Gertie said; "and auntie says he's dead. I haven't any relatives now but a grandmother, and I don't know where she is. I heard auntie tell a woman once that I had a history stranger than a story book, but when I asked her about it she looked cross, and bade me never listen, and said if there was any thing I ought to know she would surely tell me. Sometimes when I see such grand people I think, maybe, I am one of them, for I feel just as they act, and could act just like them if I tried."

"Maybe you are a princess in disguise," Robert said, laying his hand kindly on the bright flowing hair. "Gertie, do you know you are the very image of the only sister I ever had? Dorothea was the name, but I called her Dora, and loved her so much."

"And she died?" Gertie said, guessing the fact from the tremor in the young man's voice and the moisture in his eyes.

"Yes, she died, and I have no picture of her, and that is what I wanted you to sit for me. You are so much like her. Maybe if you tell your aunt the reason she will allow it. I am going to Schuyler Hill to visit Mr. Godfrey. Will you speak to her about it?"

Gertie promised that she would, and kept her word, and Mrs. Rogers said she would see, which Gertie took as an affirmative reply and reported to the young man, telling him too that auntie had forbidden her to talk much with him, and telling Godfrey too

that he must not come where she was so much, for auntie did not like it and said it was "no good."

"And I didn't tell her either that you kissed me; if I had she would have been angry, but you are never to do it again."

"No, not till you say you think me a perfect gentleman; then I shall claim my reward," Godfrey said, laughing.

The voyage, which, owing to adverse winds at first, had been unusually long, was over at last, and the names of "Mr. Schuyler, lady and maid," were registered at the hotel where they were to stop for a week or more before going to their home.

After her husband's reproof Edith made no attempt to see Gertie Westbrooke, but she had inquired for her every day and sent many delicacies to her, and once in the distance she had seen her shawl wrapped around a little figure which was leaning over the railing, with masses of bright hair falling beneath the pretty scarlet hood, and to herself she said "That must be Gertie Westbrooke."

But farther than that she knew nothing of the child until she heard Godfrey talking to his father about the cottage Mrs. Rogers was to have.

"Yes, certainly, I'll ask Mrs. Schuyler," Mr. Schuyler said to some suggestion of Godfrey, and then added, with a laugh, "It seems, Edith, that this child in whom you were so much interested is to be my tenant, or rather Godfrey's, as the cottage is his. He too has taken a most unaccountable fancy to the girl, and as I have ordered your suite of rooms to be wholly refurnished Godfrey has suggested that we let this Mrs. Rogers have as much of the old furniture as will be suitable for that cottage. She has everything to buy, of course, and not much means, I daresay."

This was just like Mr. Schuyler. He was very generous with his pride, and besides that he really wished to make some amends for his conduct with regard to Gertie and the shawl. Ever since that affair he had felt that he might have acted hastily, while Edith's meek acquiescence with his wishes touched him in a tender point, and now when the Rogers people came into notice again he seized the opportunity to do them a favour if possible.

"They can think they are renting the furniture with the house," he said, and as Edith signified her approval without in the least suspecting what cottage it was which was to receive the furniture from Schuyler Hill, the matter was decided, and Mrs. Rogers was told that she would find the house partly furnished, a fact which gave her much satisfaction.

Godfrey's telegram had been received by Perry, the agent, but there was no time for repairs, nor

were they needed, as the house had been well kept up and was clean and sweet as soap and water and the hands of the late occupant could make it.

At the time of refurnishing Edith's rooms at Schuyler Hill the old furniture had been stored away, some in the servants' rooms, some in the attic, and some in the barn, but it was brought together according to Mr. Schuyler's orders, and deposited in the cottage, where it lay waiting the arrival of the new tenants, concerning whom there was speculation in our little town.

"A widow and daughter," Perry said, in answer to my inquiries as to who was coming to the cottage.

I was on my way from school—for I was still the village schoolmistress—and, seeing the door open and people moving about inside, I passed through the gate and entered the rooms, where I had been but once or twice since the day when I saw Heloise Fordham there for the last time. People called it "Vine Cottage" now, it was so entirely covered with vines and creepers, and surrounded with flowering shrubs.

And a very pretty pretty place it was too; for, since it had been Godfrey's, he had taken great pains to keep it up, and beautify the yard and garden, which were fashioned a little after the grounds at Schuyler Hill.

All his rental, it was said, was expended upon the place, and, when once asked why he was so much interested in it, he replied:

"Because it is my own, I suppose, and I take care of it as I do of my horse and dog, which I wish to look as well as they can."

Such a place could not go begging for tenants, but for some reason it had been vacant for five or six weeks, when Godfrey's telegram was received, bidding Perry get it in readiness for Mrs. Rogers. Perry obeyed orders, and, in spite of the very faces of the young girls at the Hill and Miss Christine's remonstrance against having her poor, dear Emily's furniture degraded to such people, he collected the articles named in Mr. Schuyler's despatch, and carried them to the cottage, where I found them scattered about promiscuously, a half-worn velvet carpet here, a marble table and stand there, and in another place a beautiful rosewood bedstead, bearing the marks of the boy Godfrey's jack-knife, and a handsome bureau, both too tall to stand in any room except the parlour, where they were not wanted.

"What is all this?" I asked, as I stepped over oilcloth, and hearth-rug, and curtains. "Who is going to live here?"

"A Mrs. Rogers, cousin to the new madam's wait-

ing-maid," Perry replied, with a certain intonation in his voice which showed me that he had taken his cue from the house on the Hill, and was not inclined to regard with favour the cousin of "madam's waiting-maid."

Still he must obey orders, and he had brought the furniture to the cottage, and, as he said, "put it down anywhere."

"When is Mrs. Rogers expected?" I asked, and he replied:

"She may come any time, but Mr. Schuyler will not be here for two weeks or more. There's the old Harry to pay up there," and he nodded toward the house on the Hill. "I tell you, Miss Rosseter and Miss Schuyler is ridin' their highest horses."

I knew that, or rather I know what he meant; for it was no secret that the ladies at Schuyler Hill had declared war against the new mistress, who had been only a "hired companion."

"War to the knife," Miss Christine had said in the presence of the servants, who of course repeated her words, with possible additions of their own.

And that was about the state of affairs at the Hill, but it was not for me to question Perry, and so I made him no reply, but improved the opportunity of going through the house where my old friend, Heloise Fordham, used to live, and where I had bidden her good-bye with promises to come for that grave on the hillside. And I had cared for it regularly and well at first, and then as years went by and she neither came to see my work nor sent me any word I gradually began to grow a little lax in my labour, and now it was weeks if not months since I had been there, or even thought of it. But I remembered it that morning when I stood in Heloise's old room, the same where I had seen her with the tears in her eyes and the tremor in her voice as she spoke to me of Abelard, who "was not her beau," and yet very dear to her. There by the window she had stood and cut the long curl of hair and given me the vase for Abelard's grave. I had them both in my possession, the vase, which had for several seasons done duty on the grave, and the bright tress of hair, faded now a little, but beautiful still, in the box where I kept it.

"And where is the young girl?" I asked myself, as I stood there in her room, "and why has she never written me a line in all these years?"

Then, as I thought of the neglected grave, I said, aloud:

"I'll go there to-morrow and see what I can do. It must be sadly overgrown by this time."

But it rained the next day and the next, and so I did not go, but came each day by the cottage, where at last I saw the new tenants, Mrs. Rogers and her daughter, little Gertie Westbrooke.

The child was in the garden close by the fence, and glanced at me with a look which made me stop instantly to gaze at her, while the smile which broke over her face and shone in her blue eyes took me straight through the gate to her side, and before I knew at all what I was doing or why I was doing it, I was talking to her and seeming to myself like one who walks in a dream and sees there things which he has known and seen before.

Surely that smile, which came and went so frequently, and that voice, so clear and sweet and ringing, were familiar to me, and I said to the child:

"Have you been here before?"

"No, ma'am; I was bred and born in London, and yet it's funny that this place seems like home, and my room is just what I thought it would be. Won't you walk in, please, and see auntie?" she said, and I mechanically followed her into the cottage, where she presented me to the woman there with all the air and grace of one born to the purple.

"Auntie, Mrs. Rogers; this lady is—I don't believe I know your name."

And she turned inquiringly to me.

I told her who I was, and then inspected Mrs. Rogers curiously, and wondered to find her so different from Gertie. She spoke very well and appeared well, but showed at once the class to which she belonged; nor did she make pretensions to anything else than she really was—a plain, uneducated, sensible woman.

She wanted work, she said, and asked what the probabilities were of her obtaining employment either as plain-sewer or dressmaker, or both. Of course I heard about the lost money in the bank, and received the impression that she had seen better days. I liked her, on the whole, and thought her a woman of great tact and observation, and promised her my plain-sewing and my influence if she pleased me.

That was Mrs. Rogers, but Gertie—beautiful, bright-haired, blue-eyed Gertie, with that winning voice and perfect grace of manner—how can I describe her as she was when she first came to me like a new revelation of all that was sweetest and most lovely in early girlhood? I cannot do it, and will only say that from the moment I looked into her wonder-

ful eyes and felt their influence I loved her dearly and loved her ever after more and more, and love her now as I write of her with a love which sets my heart throbbing and makes my cheeks burn with excitement.

Darling Gertie, my rosebud, my pet, my idol, how little I dreamed as I stood talking with her and talking her of my school, which I hoped she would attend, of all the strange events which in a few short years would be crowded into her life, or of the blissful and which came at last with the clang of marriage-bells and the golden glory of the October time.

Mrs. Rogers would be very glad to send her to school at once, she said, as she was most anxious for her to have a thorough education; and the very next day she sat in my schoolroom in her dainty dress of blue, with her pretty, white-ruffled apron, and her auburn hair rippling all over her finely-shaped, intellectual head.

I walked home with her that night and found Mrs. Rogers in a great deal of trouble about the bedstead and the bureau which would "go nowhere," and seemed so out of place in the cottage.

"Where did they come from? Did the other tenants use them?" she asked, and as I did not see fit to enlighten her she finally determined to store them away until Mr. Godfrey came. "I am able to furnish a few rooms decently," she said, with a little flush of pride; and three days after, when I went in with Gertie, she took me up to the child's room and asked me how I liked it.

It was the same room Heloise Fordham used to occupy, and it almost seemed as if she was there again herself at my side as I stood looking at the pretty carpet and the single bed, with its snow-white draperies, the low chair near the window, and the table for Gertie's work, and the swinging shelf for her books.

"It is a pretty room," I said, "and it looks as if it did when Heloise was here."

"Who?" Gertie asked, sweeping her hair back from her forehead, just as I had seen Heloise do so many times. "Who did you say used to live here?"

"Heloise Fordham, a young girl about my age, or a little older, whose mother occupied this cottage twelve or thirteen years ago," I replied.

And Gertie rejoined:

"Why, that is my name too."

"Is it?" I asked, and she rejoined:

"Yes, Gertrude Heloise. I write it Gertrude H. for short. Don't you know?"

No, I did not know, and I had no suspicion of that, which had I known it then would have taken my senses away, I verily believe.

"Tell me about your friend. Was she pretty and good and happy? I like to know who has occupied my room before me. At Stonewark, where we were a few weeks last summer, they said my room was haunted by a girl who killed herself for love. Auntie did not wish me to sleep there. She's a bit superstitious, but I was not afraid. I liked it and tried to keep awake at night to see the ghost which threw itself out of the window just at midnight, but I always went to sleep before it came. Where is that Heloise now?"

I did not know, but, questioned by the eager little girl, I told a part of the story, and then as she grew interested and begged for more, "for the whole, the very whole," I told it her, thinking when my conscience smote me a little that after all there was no harm in telling, as no one could be wronged.

Heloise was either married or dead, the latter probably, or she would have written to me, and so it was no matter if I did tell her story and Abelard's to the child who listened so intently, her large blue eyes filling with tears, which rolled in torrents down her cheeks when I spoke of the dead man lying on the grass. I supposed she cried for him, and to a certain extent I daresay she did, though her first words were "Poor fellow, I'm so glad he didn't let Godfrey be killed."

This was the first time she had mentioned Godfrey to me, and as I had the impression that she did not know him I was going to ask her about it when she said, eagerly:

"And he was the young girl's lover, and she only fifteen, that's funny. I'm twelve and I should not think of having a beau. But go on and tell me more, and what they did with him and what she did and all of them."

I told her what they did and where they buried him, and about the monument and my promise to keep the grave clean and nice.

"And have you done it?" Gertie asked, her cheeks like roses and her eyes as bright as stars.

I confessed to recent neglect and said I had been there but once during the summer.

"Then it's awful by this time," Gertie said. "Let's go and see it to-morrow, you and I, will you?"

I promised that I would, and then, as it was grow-

ing dark, I bade her good night, she saying to me in a whisper:

"I'll not tell auntie about that girl who used to have my room, because if I did I'd have to tell about the body which lay in the parlour, and she would surely see his ghost."

She spoke of her auntie's belonging to a class different from herself as naturally as possible, and still with no shadow of contempt or disrespect in her voice.

Mrs. Rogers had always taught her that though she must expect nothing from others on account of it, she was superior to people like herself and Norah, and Gertie accepted it as a fact, not knowing exactly whether it was the forty pounds a year or the big house where she used to live, or the dead mother, or the father who would not own her, or the grandmother she had never seen, which gave her the precedence.

Still this did not abate her love one whit for her foster-mother, and when as I went through the gate I looked back a moment I saw her with one arm thrown around Mrs. Rogers's neck, while her soft, dimpled hand lovingly smoothed the hair of the woman whose face, even where I stood, showed how dear to her was the affectionate little girl.

The next day, true to my promise, I took Gertie to the Schuyler Cemetery and showed her Abelard's grave.

"James A. Lyle, born in Alnwick, 28—. Died June—18—, aged 23 years. Honour to the dead who died to save another's life," she read aloud, kneeling on the grass before the monument which marked his resting-place.

"Oh, how nice that is. 'Honour to the dead who died to save another's life,' and that other was Mr. Godfrey," she said. "And Mr. Schuyler put it here. I like him now better than I did. I thought he was proud and cold, but there must be good in him. Why, it's a splendid stone, and must have cost as much as—so much as forty pounds."

Her income was her maximum for an unheard-of sum, and she stood gazing admiringly at the stone, while her busy tongue went on:

"And this is a pretty yard with all those old Schuylers buried here. I mean old really, you know. I don't say it for bad nicknames. They were all old. 'Emily, beloved wife of Howard Schuyler, aged 36,' is the youngest of them all, and she was awful old. That must be Mr. Schuyler's first wife, Mr. Godfrey's mother. Was she as pretty, I wonder, as the new lady is? No, you have not kept the grave up nice; that girl would feel vexed if she saw it. Let's go straight to work and pull up the nasty weeds first, and look, here's a clump of lovely forget-me-nots down in the grass and sweet violets."

She talked so fast and went so rapidly from one thing to another that I had no chance to say a word, but stood watching her silently as she worked with a will, pulling up the weeds and digging about the flowers which had been making a faint struggle for life in the grass which impeded their growth.

Whether she was working for the sake of the young girl Heloise, or because it was Godfrey's life which had been saved by the necessity for that grave, I could not tell.

She talked of both, and when her task was done, and, flushed and heated with exercise, she sat down to rest, she said:

"There, Miss Heloise Fordham will feel better now, I hope, and wouldn't wonder if Mr. Godfrey liked me to be kind to the man who saved his life. Was she so very pretty, Miss Armstrong?"

I knew she meant Heloise, although her last remark had been of Godfrey, and I replied:

"Yes, very pretty. Do you know you look a little like her, only your hair is auburn, and hers was golden brown, while your eyes are blue and hers were a brownish gray."

"Do I? Am I like her? Am I pretty?" Mr. Godfrey said I was," she exclaimed, her face lighting up with a glow which made her, as I thought, the most beautiful creature I ever saw.

"You have spoken of Mr. Godfrey several times," I said. "Where did you know him?"

"Why, in the ship and in the cab, and in the church when his new mother was married, and everywhere," she replied.

And then, by dint of a few questions adroitly put, I heard nearly all she had to tell of Godfrey, who had stared at her in the cab, and kissed her flowers in the church, and herself on shipboard.

"But he'll never do that again," she said. "I told him it wasn't proper, and he said he wouldn't, until—until—" her face grew crimson as she continued, "until I could say I thought him a perfect gentleman, with no slang or nonsense, and then he is to kiss me again, but that will never be, I suppose."

She stuck up the toe of her little foot and looked demurely at it while she settled the kissing affair with so much gravity, and I—well, my thoughts did

leap into the future and then leaped back again when I remembered Alice Creighton and the proud girls at Schuyler Hill.

As if divining something of my thoughts she asked, abruptly:

"Do you know Mr. Godfrey's sisters? He told me he had two."

"Yes, I know them; they were my pupils when their governess left suddenly," I said.

And she continued:

"Are they pretty, and shall I ever see them?"

I daresay she meant to ask if they would notice her at all, and as I knew they would not I gave her question another meaning and replied:

"They are almost always at church, and the Schuyler pew is the large square one in front. You will be sure to see them there."

"Yes, I am going next Sunday, but we must sit near the door, I suppose. Still, I shall see them come in, for I mean to be early, and I do hope Mr. Godfrey will be here by that time with the beautiful Lady Edith."

Here was an opportunity I could not let slip, my woman's curiosity was so strong, and so I said:

"Is Mrs. Schuyler beautiful?"

"Yes, she is; the beautifullest woman I ever saw. Why, she looked like a queen the morning she was married, and more like his daughter than his wife."

"Have you seen her often? Were you near to her in church?" I asked, in some surprise, unable to reconcile her statement of the new Mrs. Schuyler's beauty with a rumour which had reached me in a roundabout way concerning her age and personal appearance.

"Yes, I was very near her in church and threw her some flowers, and I saw her many times at Oakwood, in the grounds where she walked in her pretty white dresses. I did not speak to her, you know. I was some way off, but I could see how handsome she was, and everybody said so too."

This was Gertrude's reply, which puzzled me. Without knowing exactly how I became possessed of the information, I nevertheless did know the Schuyler Hill ladies were expecting something dreadful in the bride and were preparing themselves accordingly, while Gertrude's story seemed to contradict the entire thing. But all I had to do was to wait and see for myself, so I asked no more questions, and as the afternoon was drawing to a close we left the cemetery and took a path homeward which led near to the great house on the hill. The ladies were playing croquet on the lawn, Miss Christine and all, and Gertrude pulled my dress and whispered:

"See, there they are, four ladies; which are the sisters, and who are the others?"

I pointed out Julia and Emma Schuyler, and told her the dark, elderly lady in the black dress and scarlet shawl was Miss Rossiter, Godfrey's aunt, and that the light-haired girl, with her hair put up so high, was Miss Alice Creighton, who spent a great deal of time at Schuyler Hill—Mr. Schuyler being her guardian.

"Oh, how I like to play croquet! Why, if I can only get a ball I can go clear round the ground the first time. Do you think they would ask us to join them if we went nearer?" she said; and I replied that I hardly thought that they would care to give up that game for the sake of taking us in, while to myself I wondered at her temerity in proposing such a thing.

I do not know her then as well as I did afterward, for though she could tell Godfrey Schuyler that he must not talk to her because she was poor and auntie said he mustn't, in her heart she was a born aristocrat and felt no distinction except the accident of wealth between herself and people like the Schuylers. She never forgot that her mother was a lady, and though she had but forty pounds a year and her auntie was a seamstress, she felt no inferiority to any one, and expected kindness and attention from all. It was a little singular that of the four ladies in the lawn she should have singled out Alice Creighton as the subject for remark, and not very complimentary remarks either.

"Why does she wear her hair so high?" she asked, and when I explained that it was the height of fashion she answered, "But it is very ugly and makes her look so queer. Will Mr. Godfrey like that? He said mine was pretty on my neck," and taking off her bonnet she let her bright, wavy hair fall in masses around her face and down her back.

"You are a little girl," I said, "and Miss Creighton is seventeen, and engaged, I think."

"Engaged!" she repeated. "That's funny, and she so young. Is it to Mr. Godfrey?"

I was stooping to button my boot and did not answer her, while she forgot to put the question again, and, clutching my arm, said in a whisper:

"Look, she is coming here, this way, right toward us."

"Good-evening, Miss Armstrong," she said. "I

saw you standing here, and got our governess to take my place while I came to ask if you know of any one who can do plain-sewing. Adams is ill just when I need her most, and I thought you might know of some one."

"I do—I know—Auntie sews splendidly," Gertrude's voice rang out, clear and silvery as a bell, while Alice stared at her superciliously at first, then curiously, and turned to me with a questioning look in her haughty eyes.

I knew Miss Creighton would never forgive me if I introduced her formally to the protégée of one who did plain sewing, so I merely said:

"This is Gertrude Westbrooke, my pupil, whose aunt lives at Vine Cottage, and will, I daresay, be glad of your work."

Gertrude bowed, but Alice's head was high as ever, and as she had thrown off her hat she did look funny with that little ball of hair perched on the top of her head.

But it was fashionable, and Alice led the fashions there, and it was not for me to criticize, though I did mentally compare the two girls, as they stood side by side, Gertrude, with her wealth of auburn hair, on which the setting sunlight fell, giving it here and there a golden gleam, her blue eyes opened wide and full of eager interest in the girl who was engaged, her simple gingham frock, her pretty frilled white apron and rather coarse shoes; the whole so different from the ruffled silk, old enough for a woman of twenty-five, the dainty boots of bronze, the profusion of jewellery, the elaborately arranged hair, the small, retouched nose, and the half-shut, sleepy eyes which stared so hard at Gertrude, as if she were a new species of the animal kingdom never seen before.

"Yes, I heard Godfrey had some new tenants in his house," she said, "and I am glad to know the woman can sew. I wonder if she does it well? Did she do this?"

And she put out her hand to lift Gertrude's apron for inspection.

But the child took a step backward and said, with the manner of a duchess:

"Yes she did this, and she sews very well. You can judge for yourself by trying her."

Alice elevated her eyebrows, and I was almost certain the ball on her head took an upward inclination too, but she said nothing except that she would call to-morrow and see the woman.

"What is her name, did you say?"

"I told her Mrs. Rogers, and, with a little nod that she understood me, she added:

"You have not been to see us for a long time, Miss Armstrong. You ought to be there these days and see the way Miss Christine is in. It's too comical for anything, and would amuse me vastly were it not that I, too, feel vexed, and annoyed, and sorry for the girls. It's too bad to have such a stepmother brought home to them, and I do not blame them for feeling aggrieved. I should rebel, too, to have such a woman thrust upon me."

Gertrude had stood very quietly listening to Miss Creighton, her eyes growing larger and darker, and the blood mounting to her cheeks and brow, which were crimson as she burst out:

"It isn't so, Miss Creighton, if by 'such a woman' you mean something bad. It is not so. Lady Edith is beautiful. I know her. I've seen her. She gave me a shawl and sent me things when I was ill."

Alice, who was so affected to be nearsighted, and carried a glass at her side, raised it to her eyes and inspected this champion of Mrs. Schuyler, saying, with a little laugh:

"Really I am glad to meet with one of Mrs. Schuyler's acquaintances, and to hear so good an account of her. Pray, do you know her well?"

Gertrude understood her meaning and answered, spiritedly:

"I am not one of her acquaintances. I'm nobody but Gertrude Westbrooke, but I've seen her many times in the grounds at Oakwood, and when she came to her mother's, where we had lodgings, and I know she is good and pretty and a lady, and Mr. Godfrey likes her."

"Do you know Godfrey too? Your circle of friends must be quite extended," was Alice's next remark, to which Gertrude did not reply.

She was trying on her bonnet and only gave a quick, angry glance at Miss Creighton as she started to walk away.

"That's a queer little thing," Alice said as I stood a moment with her. "Rather pretty too, isn't she, with those blue eyes and that bright hair? How she did flame up though in Mrs. Schuyler's defence. Her account of the lady does not tally with Godfrey's, but then I suppose it was the shawl and the nice things which caught her fancy. Did she say she was a lodger of Mrs. Schuyler's mother? That is something quite new and worse than the hired companion. Poor Julia and Emma. I really pity them, and they so proud and exclusive."

"Alice, Alice, come, we want you," came floating across the lawn from Julia Schuyler, and with a quick little nod, such as she always gave me, Miss Creighton went back to her companions, leaving me to think of what Gertrude had said about the lodging with Mrs. Schuyler's mother, and to feel, it may be, only glad that the Schuylers were to be punished a little for their arrogance and pride.

Once Mr. Schuyler had taken me to ride, not as a compliment, but as a favour, and to save me a walk of three long miles on a warm, sultry day, and, as I afterward heard, that act had caused much comment at the Hill, Miss Rossiter wondering if "Brother Howard could not find somebody besides a country schoolmistress to ride with."

I was offended and indignant, for I knew I had no more design on Mr. Schuyler than he had on me. Had he been worth his weight in gold I would not have married him and taken my chance with that family; and as I walked slowly home through the fields that night after my meeting with Miss Creighton, and thought of the "hired companion," and the daughter of a "lodging-house woman," I pitied the bride from the bottom of my heart, feeling, as I did, that to be mistress of Schuyler Hill was no enviable position.

I did not know Edith then.

(To be continued.)

THE JEWELLER OF FRANKFORT

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE wedding-day was near at hand. One morning the Steinberg family were seated in their breakfast room, with the exception of the jeweller.

Frederika and her mother were at work on some part of the bridal toilet.

Hermann and Claudine were whispering together—a piece of ill-breeding pardonable only in affianced lovers—when Nicolaus entered the room, holding an open letter in his hand.

He took a seat in his arm-chair and beckoned Claudine to him.

"Daughter," he said, in a low tone, as she was leaning on his chair, "this letter concerns you. Read it, and do as you please about it."

She glanced at it, appeared greatly agitated as she read it to herself, and sobbed as she finished it.

"Give it back to me, darling," whispered the jeweller. "I ought not to have shown it to you. I will destroy it—only you and I need know about it."

"No," said the girl, drying her eyes and turning to the wondering family. "No; not at least till I have read it aloud. Dear mother and sister, dear Hermann, I did not think I had an enemy in the world. This letter proves that I have some secret and deadly foe. Hear it, and then pronounce between me and this anonymous assailant."

And with a clear voice and open brow she read the anonymous letter which Nicolaus Steinberg had handed her:

"TO NICOLAUS STEINBERG, JEWELLER.—Sir,—Hearing that your son was about to marry an inmate of your family, who goes by the name of Claudine Duval, I feel it my duty to make you acquainted with her character. I know all about her. She is an impostor. Nobody knows her parentage, but she began life as a rag-picker. Afterwards she was a rope-dancer in the Empress's Circus at Paris."

"She has been a thief and worse. Employed as a servant she robbed her employer. She succeeded in dodging the French police and went to Germany. She got into your family by false recommendations. She has been the companion of thieves and murderers. She has no dowry but shame and infamy—no recommendation but her beauty, and that she had traded on through life. Proofs of all this the writer will produce if you will put a line in the *Times*, addressed to Z.Y.X., appointing a place of interview, and pledging yourself that you will give no information against the writer, who has weighty reasons for keeping concealed, but who is your and your son's

"FRIEND."

"You have heard this libel," said Claudine. "It is false in every line. It is written with some vague view of extorting money. I have an opinion of its source. Hermann, you know one person in this city who has a motive for blackening my character and destroying your peace. We will not name that person, but I detect a woman's hand in this."

Full well she knew, in her secret heart, the source of the denunciation.

The letter was not in Bastian's handwriting, but none but Bastian could have dictated it.

"My dear friends," continued Claudine, "you

have heard this anonymous accusation and my denial. You know whether I have sought to impose on you. You know that I entered this family as a servant, and was content with servant's wages and a servant's duty until your kindness extorted from me the confession of my birth and rank. Day and night I have been with you and you know whether my conduct is consistent with the character this nameless libeller has given me. But if there is any one among you who doubts me, if I cannot come into this family untarnished by a breath of suspicion, I will take my departure, though only to die. As a servant in another family I will earn my bread, and not one murmur shall appeal against my banishment. Dying, my last thoughts will be of my benefactors and my happiness beneath their roof."

She could say no more, for tears and sobs choked her utterance.

"Hermann, my son," said the jeweller, "it is for you to speak."

Hermann took the anonymous letter from the nerveless hand of his affianced bride.

"I, too," he said, "have had such charges brought against me. I have never spoken of it before except to Claudine. I know what it is to be traduced and slandered. A man in this city and his daughter, whom I thought my friends, accused me—Hermann Steinberg—of theft. They have seen their error, but I refused to be reconciled, and they have become my enemies. This arrow, aimed at my heart no less than at Claudine's, comes out of the Falkenstein quiver—I am sure of it. And as I would have had the Falkensteins treat the charge against me so do I treat this foul slander on my bride. I tear the infamous libel and trample it under my feet."

He tore the letter into shreds and stamped on it. Then he folded Claudine in his arms, and said:

"My darling, if the whole world assailed you I would believe in your truth."

"And you are right," cried the jeweller. "She is every way worthy of you."

Linda and Frederika echoed the sentiment, and they all embraced Claudine.

She appeared completely overcome by their confidence and love. Tears streamed down her cheeks and her voice trembled as she faltered forth her thanks.

When she had released herself from their loving embraces she hurried out of the room and went to her chamber.

Her artificial tears were soon dried and she smiled proudly and triumphantly at her image in the mirror.

"Poor, simple-hearted, credulous people," she thought. "They are plastic clay in my skillful hands. But, Bastian, this last attack has sealed your doom. You meant to destroy me—you have destroyed yourself."

She put on a very plain walking-dress, a hat with a thick veil, left the house without seeing the family, and went directly to Colonel Mowbray's office, where she solicited a private interview. She proceeded at once to business.

"Sir," said she, after making known her name and residence, "there is now lurking in this city a fugitive from French justice, an escaped convict, a murderer and robber. This man, whom I had known in other days, and on whom I had bestowed charity, has been writing threatening letters, and, I fear, seeks my life, because he can no longer blackmail me."

"And knowing this you have kept silence?" said the chief, reproachfully.

"I was afraid of him; and I warn you, sir, that he is a most desperate villain. Now that I have absolutely refused to be plundered by him I fear his vengeance. He must be secured."

"I think I can guess his name," said the chief. "It is Paul Maurice. A French detective, aided by our men, is already on his track."

"That is not his name to my knowledge, though it may be one of his aliases, for he has figured under different names and disguises. His real name is Cesar Bastian."

"I have never heard that name before," said the colonel.

He took out his pocket-book and handed her the photograph of Paul Maurice.

"That is not the man, sir," she said, decidedly.

He handed her another photograph which Jacques Renard had given him without telling him whose it was.

"That is Cesar Bastian," said Claudine.

"Could you identify him, if necessary?"

"Yes; but I should not wish to be confronted with him, if it could be avoided. He has on his right arm just above the wrist, marked indelibly in the flesh, an anchor surmounted by a crown and the initials C. B."

The colonel thought it strange that a young lady could be so intimately acquainted with a felon, but he made no comment, while he entered her declaration in his note-book.

"And where should we be most likely to find this jail-bird?" he asked.

"I cannot tell where he now lurks. Do you know a house kept by a Madame Bertrand, sir?"

"Old Madame Bertrand? Yes, we have our eye on that creature."

"Well, sir, not long ago he harboured under her roof. If you could secure her—terrify her—she could doubtless tell you his hiding-place and identify him. I trust, sir, that you will regard this interview as confidential and that if you arrest this man, you will keep me out of court, if possible."

"I will do my best to comply with your wishes, madam. Yet if the ends of justice should require it, I should have to subpoena you."

"In that case my evidence would be at your service, sir."

She saluted the officer and left the room.

"It is a very strange business," thought the chief. "And I should not be surprised if I had to arrest this lady herself. She has kept a good deal back from me."

Jacques Renard entered.

He looked discouraged.

"No news yet of my bank robber," he said.

"And the other?"

"What other?"

"Cesar Bastian."

"How did you discover—"

"That the man who escaped the guillotine, and broke jail, the man against whom you have such a spite, was Cesar Bastian, and that that was his portrait you gave me without name? Oh! my dear fellow, our police are quite as shrewd as yours. Let me tell you, besides, that this culprit can be identified among other things, by indelible marks on his right arm—an anchor, crown, and his initials."

"By Jove! you must be a conjurer!" exclaimed Jacques Renard.

"Oh, not at all. But I'm always picking up valuable bits of information—odds and ends—here and there."

"See here," said the detective. "A few nights ago I thought I had discovered Cesar Bastian—wonderfully disguised. The eyes and voice I thought were his, and I thought he recognized me, though he came boldly and sat down at the same table with me. Still that daring was like Bastian. I picked a quarrel with him; we stripped to fight, and when his arms were bared I found that I'd been suspecting the wrong man. He was no more Cesar Bastian than you are. If I hadn't pretended to be drunk I believe the honest fellow would have given me a sound thrashing. The disappointment was enough without that."

"Well, I have reason to believe," said Mowbray, "that the man you are after is in this town. I have discovered one of his haunts, that Madame Bertrand's we were speaking of the other day. I've got enough against her to 'pull' her. I think that by scaring the old woman I can get her to turn evidence."

"When will you move in this matter?" cried the detective, eagerly.

"To-night. The neighbours have complained of her keeping a disorderly house. It must be very disorderly if her guests make noise enough to disturb the neighbourhood, for it stands by itself, not in a block. We'll make a descent to-night."

"I must go with the officers."

"You shall."

"Is it possible my revenge is so near at hand?" cried Renard. "Let me but arrest the villain and I shall die content."

CHAPTER XXV.

THE day arrived which was to make Hermann Steinberg and Claudine Duval one. The girl was in a state of feverish excitement. She was ready to take the oath "to love, honour, and obey" her lord and master.

She would as readily have made the promise if the bridegroom had been his father. She cared nothing for the man but for his position and his money.

On his part, Hermann, as the hour for the ratification of his offer approached, was, when alone, strangely depressed. The image of Flora Falkenstein would rise up before him in spite of all his efforts to banish it.

But when he was with Claudine the spell of her beauty enthralled him and he never then doubted his own heart.

At any rate the die was cast. For good or for evil his destiny was decided.

The wedding was to take place at the jeweller's house in the evening. Neighbours and friends enough to fill the rooms had been invited, and after nightfall they began to gather.

The Hartmanns came, having laid aside their mourning for the occasion.

The parlours were dressed with flowers and evergreens, and a fine band had been engaged to furnish music. The long tables in the dining-room were loaded with luxuries for the entertainment of the guests.

In one of the rooms the bridal presents were displayed and duly visited and admired.

Honest Nicolaus Steinberg was everywhere, with a shake of the hand and a kind word for every guest.

He looked certainly ten years younger than his age, while his charming wife, entirely recovered from her long illness, appeared almost girlish in the renewal of her youthful charms.

There was good reason for the cheerfulness of the faithful couple.

It was not like one of those weddings which are immediately followed by the departure of the flower of the family. Hermann and Claudine were not even to make the usual bridal tour. Their wedded life was to begin and end under the family roof-tree—in the homestead, for Nicolaus had bought the house in which they lived.

The good old clergyman who was to perform the wedding ceremony arrived punctually, and every one seemed anxious—but one.

Just before the ceremony one of those sudden storms, so common in our variable climate, arose, and a crash of thunder, heavy as the discharge of a park of artillery, broke directly over the roof and shook the house to its foundation.

Some of the young ladies screamed in terror, and some of the old people shook their heads, remembering the old saying:

"Happy is the bride that the sun shines on."

Happy is the corpse that the rain rains on."

But they forgot their fears and doubts when the band, stationed in the hall, struck up the exultant strain of the "Wedding March," and the bride and bridegroom, with their little escort of bridesmaids and bridesmaids, walked into the room and took their places before the old clergyman.

No timid, shrinking bride was Claudine Duval. She walked to her place with the step of a queen, and the fire of her black eyes almost paled the rays of the diamond spray that flashed among the orange blossoms of her bridal wreath.

Her lips and cheeks were as red as any of the roses that glowed in the vases that adorned the room.

There was so much magnetism in her peerless beauty that no one looked at the bridegroom—all eyes were riveted upon her glowing countenance.

The old clergyman opened the sacred volume. He stood between the windows of the rooms which opened on the garden, with his back to them and facing the company.

As the bride was lifting her eyes with composure a sudden flash of terror shot from them and she raised her white-gloved hand.

In an instant the sharp report of a pistol rang out, and, with a cry of agony, the stricken bride fell into the arms of Hermann.

A dark crimson stream trickled down her white dress.

Instantly all was horror and confusion indescribable. Shrieks and groans were uttered by the guests.

While some of the men rushed out of doors to give the alarm and pursue the assassin, others, women, wringing their hands wildly, crowded round the fallen bride.

"Stand back!" cried Hermann; "give her air!"

Doctor Bolman."

The faithful physician, pale but calm, like the soldier in the hour of battle, was at his post in an instant.

They placed Claudine on the sofa, while the doctor bent over her and examined her wound.

"Is it mortal?" gasped the wounded woman.

"I cannot save you," faltered the doctor. "You have but a few moments to live."

"I must employ them," said Claudine, firmly.

"Staunch my hurt as well as you may, and let only the family remain with me. I have that to say which must not be heard by strangers."

Her wishes were complied with, only the Steinbergs, the Hartmanns and the doctor stood by the couch.

Hermann bent in agony over his doomed bride, and sought to take her hand, but she withdrew it.

"Hermann Steinberg," she said, "touch me not."

The hand that has grasped that of felons in friendship and fellowship would pollute your honest clasp. Hear me. That accusing paper you would not believe was true to the letter. I am an impostor and a criminal. Do not weep, Hermann—I am too vile a creature to deserve a tear. I never loved you. For months I watched the falling health of your mother, hoping for her death that I might marry your father. To get money and position I would even have poisoned her. When this beauty which has so bewitched and bewildered all of you is a dead image, bury me—I care not where. But I make one request—pursue my murderer! Bear witness to my dying declaration—I was shot by Cesar Bastian. I saw him clinging to the vine-trellis, there at the window, in the glare of the lightning. I looked into the muzzle of his pistol and saw him pull the trigger. Remember—Cesar Bastian."

"She is wandering," said Mrs. Steinberg. "It could not be Caspar Bastian, because—"
 "Hush, woman," said Claudine, pointing to the Hartmanns. "Do not tell all you know, for their sakes."

Even in this hour of alarm and horror Linda Steinberg was composed enough to think:

"That man alive! What has become of the poor children?"

Claudine seemed to have made a supreme effort to utter her confession and denunciation.

The doctor wet her lips with wine.

She raised her white hand, still gloved with kid, and pointed to the window and said:

"Remember—Caspar Bastian!"

Then she gave a great sigh and expired.

"Any hope, doctor?" cried the wedding-guests, gathering round the physician in the hallway as he was leaving the house.

They read his answer in his ashen face, even before his lips replied:

"The poor thing is dead."

Storm and darkness favoured the flight of the assassin.

Though the alarm was instantly given his speed and cunning secured his escape.

All London rang next day with the details of this crime, the boldest, the most appalling which had been perpetrated for many years.

A bride shot almost in the bridegroom's arms! Who was safe from the assassin's bullet?

Meanwhile, we may be sure, that the police and the detectives, though baffled, were hard at work to discover traces of the criminal.

Madame Bertrand's sentence was suspended, and she was released, after an interview with the judge and the superintendent of police. She might be relied upon as an assistant in the pursuit of the murderer.

The unhappy Claudine was not buried ignominiously, for her remains were in charge of an honest family, so truly Christian as to pity the sinner while they abhorred the sin.

Beautiful in death, shrouded and confined, she was carried to her last resting-place, in a rural cemetery, where her grave is now marked by a plain white marble headstone on which are inscribed the initials "C. D."—nothing else.

The shock of her death affected Hermann severely. He could not easily forget that he had loved this woman, or believed that he loved her. He was grave and thoughtful, a changed man.

Some days after the terrible event a man called at the house and requested an interview with Mr. Steinberg, junior.

The moment he came into the room, where he was requested to sit down, Hermann recognized Hans Spellman, the sole survivor of the "Snow Cloud."

"Well, sir," said Spellman, "you see I have not forgotten my promise. My chest has reached me all right. I have recovered my note-book, and find I made a memorandum of my talk with Bachmann. But there is only one item that I had not remembered: Carl Wolff and children, who were to have come in the 'Snow Cloud,' took passage in the 'Allemania.'"

"It is the missing clue!" exclaimed Hermann, forgetting his own troubles in the joy of the hope this information gave him. "I thank you heartily, Mr. Spellman. My anxiety will soon be relieved, for the 'Allemania' happens just now to be in dock."

"Are you going on board of her?"

"At once."

"Will you let me go with you?"

"With pleasure; I shall be glad of your company."

The young man got his hat and, with honest Hans, hastened and went on board the steamship.

He was lucky enough to find the purser on board, to whom he made known his errand.

He mentioned the date of the voyage, and asked the purser if he remembered a boy and girl who came passengers, placing the photograph of Caspar and Minna in his hands.

The instant the officer saw the picture he said:

"I remember them perfectly. I had many a romp with the little girl, and many a chat with the boy. They were in charge of a surly fellow, who seemed to dislike their playing or talking much with the other children."

Hermann handed him the photograph of Caspar Bastian.

"That's the man," said the purser, without a moment's hesitation. "I never liked his looks. Hope he's no friend of yours."

"No," replied Hermann, with a frown. "The fact is the children are lost. This man is believed to have spirited them away or murdered them."

He would not trust himself to say more, and took a hurried leave of the purser and of Spellman.

He went directly to the *Times* office, where he wrote an advertisement to appear next day, in which he gave the names and description of the children, the name of the ship they came in, and the date of

her arrival, and promised a liberal reward to any person who would give immediate information of them to Hermann Steinberg, to which he appended his address.

That night he did not close his eyes for anxiety and impatience.

He read his advertisement next day, but he took care not to let his family see it, for fear of exciting hopes which might be blighted.

About noon he was told that a police officer wanted to see him in the sitting-room.

He hurried to meet the man, supposing that it was an officer with some tidings of the fugitive assassin.

"I'm come about the children," said McAllister, handing him a slip from the *Times*. "Are you Mr. Hermann Steinberg?"

"Yes, that is my name, sir."

"What relation are you to the missing children?"

"They are my cousins. Have you any intelligence about them? See, here are their photographs."

"The children are a great deal prettier than the picture. Any intelligence? I've got the boy and girl themselves."

"Where are they?"

"They're waiting in charge of a gentleman. I came on ahead to see if all was right. Shall I fetch 'em here?"

"Do, my good fellow, with all speed."

When the policeman was gone Hermann rushed into his mother's room.

"Mother," he said, "summon up all your courage. I have something important to tell you."

"No more ill news I hope, Hermann; I think we have had our share of trouble."

"No, no, the best of news. Minna and Caspar—they are alive and well."

Mrs. Steinberg clasped her hands, sank on her knees and offered up a fervent thanksgiving, in which her son joined.

Nicolaus was called up from the shop to hear the good tidings.

In a fever of excitement they rushed downstairs, for they had heard the door-bell and the sound of feet in the hallway.

Entering the sitting-room they found, besides Frederika and two men, whom they scarcely noticed, the long-lost Caspar and Minna.

What tears were shed! What embraces given! The children were nearly devoured with kisses. Questions followed each other so fast that the poor boy and girl could hardly answer them.

It was only when they had got an outline of their story that the Steinbergs turned to the officer and his companion.

Nicolaus grasped the policeman's hand and poured out his thanks incoherently.

After the congratulations had somewhat subsided Caspar suddenly became grave, and his eyes were moistened with tears.

"What is the matter now, dear?" asked Frederika, who was holding his hand.

"It is so hard to come home and not find father and mother. If they were only alive!"

"My dear child," said Mrs. Steinberg, "they are alive and well."

Caspar's joy at this intelligence was unbounded.

"The bad man told us they were dead," said little Minna.

Mr. Steinberg took McAllister aside and offered him a large sum of money.

"Not a penny," said the honest officer. "I done by them stray children like I would have some Christian do by my young uns if they was homeless wanderers."

"You are married, then? Give me your address."

Mr. Steinberg entered it in his note-book, and the next week Mrs. McAllister was wearing a handsome gold watch and chain to the envy and astonishment of her neighbours, while each of her children rejoiced in the possession of a costly silver cup, gifts of the large-hearted Jeweller.

As money could not be tendered to Mr. Rosenberg, something above price—the thanks and the friendship of honest hearts—were offered and accepted.

He was told to consider himself one of the family.

The two kind friends of the children at last took their leave.

As McAllister was going Caspar clung to his hand and whispered in his ear:

"Don't be too hard on Jim, for he was very good to us poor little children."

It was decided that Hermann should hurry to the Hartmanns and break the news to them, while Mr. and Mrs. Steinberg, Frederika, Caspar and Minna followed in a carriage.

Young Steinberg accomplished his delicate task successfully after an agitating interview, and the happy parents were comparatively calm when the carriage drove up, and they locked their lost darlings in their arms.

Surely the angels who watched over the good and true must have wept tears of joy over that happy meeting.

Caspar had brought his box and brushes with him.

"My poor boy!" said Hildegarde. "And so you had to earn your living as a bootblack, while your father and I—"

Her voice was choked with sobs.

"It was an honest living, dear mother," said the boy, proudly.

"You are right, Caspar," said the father. "No boy or man need be ashamed of any calling that is honest. You must always keep that box, the gift of a good man, and no matter how rich you become, never be too proud to show it as the stepping-stone to your fortune."

"I'm rich already," said the boy. "I've got fifty pounds in the bank."

"Come, children," said the mother, softly, "I've got something pretty to show you."

She led them into the next room, and there, lifting a gauze curtain, she showed them two rosy infants sleeping in their cradle.

"Heaven has sent you a little brother and sister," she said, gently. "You will love them dearly, for but for them your mother would have died of grief, thinking you were dead, my darlings."

Uncle Christian, of Mainz, was not forgotten in the general joy.

The very day the children were recovered a message was flashed to him by the electric cable.

Quicker than light the good tidings flashed—quicker than light it was caught up on the shore and darted to the Rhine bank, and to the honest merchant.

Just as he was sitting down to write to Hermann, with a heavy heart, "No tidings of our darlings," he read: "Caspar and Minna alive and well—particulars by next mail."

The good old man instantly resolved to sell out his stock and join them in England, a purpose which he finally accomplished.

(To be continued.)

THE Queen is expected shortly to proceed from Balmoral Castle across country to Inverlochry Castle, Lord Abinger's seat, near Fort William, where she will reside for eight or ten days. It is expected that while there Her Majesty will ascend Ben Nevis and picnic near the summit. Arrangements are already being made for the Queen's reception, and we understand that Colonel Macpherson of Cluny has had an interview with Her Majesty to arrange for the journey. The Queen will thereafter embark on board a yacht at Fort William and proceed to Inverary, on a visit to the Duke and Duchess of Argyll. The date fixed for Her Majesty's visit to Inverlochry Castle, Inverness-shire, is the 4th September, and the Queen will reside there ten days, Lord and Lady Abinger retiring to Kiltchore House, twelve miles distant.

DIAMONDS.—The Persians believe that diamonds are entitled to especial veneration, not so much from their intrinsic or saleable value, as from their so-called divine origin, as they hold the theory that these stones fell from Heaven at a very early period of the world's creation. Curiously enough, the celestial, if not the divine, origin is admitted by many modern savants, and M. Collas has propounded the theory that the crystallization of carbon, like that of phosphate of lime and silica, took place in the remote regions of the atmosphere, and that diamonds were produced not by heat, but by an extreme cold greater than has ever existed in the globe during the "glacial epochs." In his opinion the diamond is an ante-geological formation, which must have become crystallized at a period when, according to Kant and Laplace, the nebulous substance which resulted in our planetary system was in course of condensation. They afterwards circulated in space, either in the shape of comets or in belts of aerolites, following a more or less regular course around the sun. He adduces the distribution of diamonds throughout the earth's surface in support of this theory, and argues that the fact of their extending from the Atlas Mountains, through Persia, India, Borneo, and the Cape of Good Hope, to Brazil, as a proof that they follow a regular ellipsis, which may be made complete by fresh discoveries. His theory may not be universally accepted, but we shall all agree with M. Collas that "diamonds deserve to be looked upon with great respect," so long, at least, as they retain their present value in the market.

CIVIL LIST PENSIONS.—The following is the list of pensions granted during the year ended the 20th of June, 1873, and charged upon the Civil List: Mrs. Sarah Gordon, in consideration of the services of her late husband as inventor of iron lighthouses, 50*l*.; Miss Eliza Keightley, in consideration of the valuable assistance which she rendered to her brother, Mr. Thomas Keightley, in the course of his histori-

cal studies, and of her own destitute condition, to commence from the 5th of November, 1872, inclusive, being the day following the death of her brother, to whom a Civil List pension was granted of 100*l.* a year in 1855, 50*l.*; Mrs. Louisa Chesney, widow of the late General Chesney, in consideration of the services of her late husband in connection with the Euphrates Expedition in 1835, 100*l.*; Mr. William Gibbs Rogers, in recognition of his services as a wood-carver, 50*l.*; Mr. Alexander Bain, in recognition of his scientific services as inventor of electric clocks and other instruments, 80*l.*; Dr. Samuel Sebastian Wesley, in recognition of his musical talents, 100*l.*; Miss Martha Charters Somerville, in consideration of the eminent services rendered to the natural sciences by her late mother, Mrs. Somerville, 50*l.*; Miss Mary Charlotte Somerville, in consideration of the eminent services rendered to the natural sciences by her late mother, Mrs. Somerville, 50*l.*; Mrs. Frederick Louisa Knowles, widow, in consideration of the heroic conduct of her late husband, Captain Knowles, on the occasion of the loss of the "Northfleet," 50*l.*; Mrs. Ann Munday, widow, in consideration of the services of her brother, Lieutenant Waghorn, in connection with the opening of the Overland Route to India, and of her own destitute circumstances, 25*l.*; Mrs. Sarah Ransom, widow, in consideration of the services of her brother, Lieutenant Waghorn, in connection with the opening of the Overland Route to India, and of her own destitute circumstances, 25*l.*; Miss Mary Jane Waghorn, in consideration of the services of her brother, Lieutenant Waghorn, in connection with the opening of the Overland Route to India, and of her own destitute circumstances, 25*l.*; Mr. Edward Masson, in consideration of his services to classical literature, 100*l.*; Mr. William Mann, in consideration of the time and labour which he has devoted to the service of astronomy, whereby his health has become seriously impaired, 50*l.*; Mrs. Elizabeth Williams, widow of the Rev. J. Williams, formerly rector of Llanymowddwy, in consideration of the value of her husband's Celtic and archaeological researches, 50*l.*; Mrs. Agnes Moir, widow, in consideration of the services of her husband, the late Dr. Moir, in connection with medicine, and of her own destitute condition, 45*l.*; Dr. David Livingstone, Consul in the Interior of Africa, etc., in consideration of the value of his discoveries in Central Africa, 300*l.* Total 1,200*l.*

STEPPING-STONES.

CHAPTER II.

"You do not understand the case in all its bearings, mother," said Ronald Hartley, with ill-concealed impatience. "You cannot comprehend how I shrink from removing Julie from the life of beauty and luxury to which she was born; how unfitted the poor child really is, despite her brave heart, to cope with the comparative hardships of the best home I could offer her for a long while to come. Mr. Mebane, appreciating this, and being, moreover, unwilling to part with his only single daughter, has, in the most friendly manner, insisted that we shall live with him. He urges that his house is larger than is needful for his own family, consisting now of himself and wife, his son Sylvester and Julie. Mrs. Mebane's health is delicate, and she pleads that her child may be allowed to remain with her. Can anything be more kind and reasonable? Would I not be a selfish man were I to negative the united petitions of Julie and her parents for a whim of mine, growing out of a past difference of opinion between her father and myself?"

"It is all right, I suppose, my dear boy," replied the widow, thoughtfully stroking her apron. "I only feared lest you, with your independent spirit, would not be pleasantly situated there. Mr. Mebane has the name of being a hard, purse-proud man."

"I am not going to marry him," interposed Ronald, shortly.

"But you will be a part of his family, and subject to his caprices, without the power of defending yourself."

He interrupted the mild argument again.

"I do not see that. He loves his daughter very dearly, and knows that to insult me would be to lose her. She should not remain under his roof for a day beyond the time at which such an offence was offered. He is too wary a tactician not to comprehend that the vantage-ground is mine."

"Would not that be unfair to your wife?" asked Rebecca's quiet voice from the table where she was sewing. "Ought not you to shelter her, instead of her standing between you and insult?"

Ronald's brow flushed darkly at this unexpected home-thrust.

"Really," he said, with a laugh his mother shuddered to hear. "I have been signally unfortunate in my arrangements! Just when I flatter myself that, having made peace with the Mebanes and gratified Julie's wish to remain with her relatives,

all is fair-sailing ahead of me, I dash upon this new reef of offence."

"No offence, my son," Mrs. Hartley hastened to say. "Nothing you can say or do can be that to us. Our first consideration is your happiness. If this will be advanced by this new plan try it by all means. Should you ever see reason to change your mind you can always find a home here until you choose to remove to one of your own."

"Here!"

The dismayed intonation was involuntary and ungracious, and he tried to efface whatever unfavourable impression it had made.

"No, mother dear, I have trespassed upon your bounty for too many years already. I am doing well in my business. Before long I hope to be able to offer Julie a pretty little home. Then you must come and live with us."

The widow pondered lovingly this invitation when he had gone, her fingers busy with her knitting through the long winter evening.

"He is a generous, affectionate son!" she thought, aloud, by-and-by.

Rebecca drew her thread and breath hard and said nothing.

She had a headache—a growing, suspicious pain discretion forbade her to put into words. She saw what her mother did not—that the current which was bearing Ronald on to prosperity was dividing him from them.

She was not jealous of his love for Julie. She was distrustful of Julie's wealth and the influence of her haughty relatives.

Yet, ought she—would she if she could—keep him back from the enjoyment of a single one of the advantages these would give him?

"And about this plan of living at Mr. Mebane's," pursued Mrs. Hartley, never satisfied until she had her daughter's opinion. "I daresay his judgment is more sound than mine. Of course we cannot visit him as freely as if he were in his own house, but if he is satisfied he should not complain. He must come to see us and bring his pretty little wife the oftener on that account."

"We must not expect it." Thus much Rebecca felt that she might say. "He doesn't belong to us now. The Bible says that, 'A man shall leave father and mother and cleave unto his wife.'"

Then she remembered with a sharper pang the Rev. Luke and the answered letter in the locked drawer upstairs.

The marriage took place in January. Mr. and Mrs. Mebane were opposed to long engagements. The former deprecated them as unbusiness-like. The latter sighed plaintively that since Julie was bent upon sacrificing herself the sooner it was over the better. His future father-in-law stated his sentiments on the subject to Ronald with no needless delicacy, and the bridegroom could hardly object to a decision that gave the prize the sooner into his keeping.

He hung back from declaring that he would be a wiser and a more honourable man if he were to postpone the fruition of his desires until he had made money enough to meet the expenses of his wedding outfit and tour. Nor, this opportunity lost, had he the moral courage to state to his fiancée frankly his inability to purchase for her such a bridal present as should not be shamed by the gifts of her rich friends. He elected instead to run into debt for a set of pearls, which after all looked pale and insignificant beside the diamonds presented by her father.

In other respects the affair was brilliant—to the optics of Mrs. Hartley and Rebecca absolutely dazzling. The thought that the gay assembly, the magnificent array of presents, the costly entertainment were honours paid to Ronald and to Ronald's wife filled the mother with wondering exultation, while the sister's satisfaction had a tinge of depression.

Her hopes for her brother's future were mingled with a presentiment that all these glories would put him farther away from the home and friendship of his boyhood. She felt the chill of the separation in the lavish respect accorded him as the rising young lawyer, the husband of a popular belle, and the son-in-law of the opulent merchant as opposed to the utter indifference of the fashionable throng to his relatives.

If any one interested himself or herself sufficiently in them to inquire who were the little old lady in bombazine and the prim woman in a figured brown silk, who sat so quietly in a recess apart from the revellers, and seemed to know nobody, the two strangers were unaware that they received that nod of notice. They went into the supper-room unattended, and when the hour of dispersing arrived got into the cab which Ronald had ordered to wait for them and drove home without an escort, uninvited to repeat the visit to the princely mansion.

But Ronald had said at parting: "I shall see you very soon after our return," and Julie had kissed them with an echo of the promise.

They had something to live upon until the receipt of the letter from them, a pleasant, loving note,

signed "Ronald and Julie," announcing the fact of their supreme content, and reiterating their intention to visit their beloved mother immediately after their arrival at home. Another hurried line from Ronald stated that they would be at home on Tuesday, the 25th of January, and by noon on that day the cottage was in its blithest winter dress.

"By the 11 a.m. train," read Mrs. Hartley from the letter. "Then they will probably—I may say certainly—be in to tea."

Rebecca's gentle demur being overruled, preparations were made for the reception of the happy pair.

Rebecca assisted bravely in the work of getting supper, and endeavoured yet more bravely to allay the apprehensions that arose in Mrs. Hartley's mind as the slow hours went by, and there were no tidings of the expected guests.

Her fears of accident and sickness were quelled on the morrow by a note from Ronald. He had found it impossible to come to them on the preceding day, Julie being sadly fatigued.

"And I could not leave her on the very evening of our return," he set down as a truism not to be contradicted. "I find an enormous accumulation of work at my office, but you may certainly expect me"—he had written "us," then erased it—"this evening. In great haste, as ever, RONALD."

"As ever to be, perhaps," sighed Rebecca to herself, after perusing the epistle. "But not as he once was!"

She erred. Ronald was unchanged, except from the circumstance that the area of his affections and aspirations was enlarged. He loved his mother and sister dearly as ever, but Julie outranked them. His memories of the brown cottage were tender and sweet, but he had outgrown it. He even felt that he was physically taller and broader than when he had left it, as he bowed his head in the low doorway that evening, and caught his breath with difficulty in the small parlour.

He came alone, but was the bearer of a verbal message from Julie, who meant to have come, but her mother prohibited it, since she was suffering from a severe cold, with predisposition to fever.

"She will be overjoyed to see you, if you can drop in some day soon," said the young husband, so heartily as to leave no doubt in his hearers' minds of his sincerity.

He could not stay to tea. He had promised Julie to be home to dinner, but during the half-hour he spared them he was so cordial in affection, so merry and free, so full of his new happiness and confident of his sympathy that their departure left a lovely twilight in the hearts that had so longed for his appearance.

"So Julie has taken cold," remarked the mother, as they were living over his call in their talk of him or his. "Don't you think, daughter, that we ought to go to see the dear little thing? She may suspect us of coldness or indifference if we stay away when she is unable to come to us."

"I think we are justified in waiting until an invitation from the Mebanes places us on visiting terms at their house, mother," said Rebecca, in her sturdy pride.

"Ronald asked us to come soon," answered the mother, flushing a little.

"It is not his house," Rebecca objected.

"It is his home, and he has surely a right to invite his mother to visit his wife," retorted Mrs. Hartley, ruffling up her plumes like a hen whose brood is attacked. "And allow me to say, Rebecca, that I am a better judge than yourself of what is right in such cases. I shall assuredly call upon Julie Hartley to-morrow unless I hear that she is decidedly better. I should like you to go with me, but I shall put no force upon your inclination."

"I will go if you wish it, mother."

"You see," pursued the mother, mollified by this respectful submission, "I have no doubt but the dear child's mother is an ignoramus so far as illness is concerned. These fashionable women generally are, and miserable housekeepers too. You remember Ronald intimated something of the sort the first time he brought Julie here to tea."

"The only time," thought Rebecca, but she had the goodness not to urge her protest.

Neither did she object to her mother's expenditure of an hour, at that busy season, in the manufacture of a small loaf of delicate cake.

"Julie took a great fancy to it the evening she was here," she said. "And invalids often relish little surprises like this."

It was her notion, also that the call should be paid when Ronald was at home—to wit, about six o'clock in the evening.

She "wanted to see her dear children together."

"I will just pin a cap under my dress skirt," was the final precaution of the far-sighted old lady. "It is possible they may insist on our staying to dinner. At any rate Julie may want me to spend the evening with her in her own room."

The bride looked anything but an invalid as she came forward hurriedly to meet the visitors an-

nounced at the parlour door as "Mrs. and Miss Hartley." She was in full dinner dress—mauve silk and point-lace—and at the instant of their entrance stood talking gaily with a knot of gentlemen, all in dress coats and white cravats. There were perhaps fifteen other persons present, and, notwithstanding the general good-breeding of the company, an awkward silence succeeded the introduction. The widow in her well-saved weeds, advancing with a meek, bewildered smile, and Rebecca, in her plain walking dress, hesitating upon the threshold, were apparitions which nothing but consummate tact and moral courage could prevent from being ridiculous under the circumstances.

Julie had tact, but no courage. Love and obstinacy had kept her constant in her troth to Ronald in defiance of her father's opposition. That she would ever be called upon to brave the laughter of her fastidious associates on account of her lover's relations had not occurred to her. She took in the situation at a glance—the distressingly absurd features of it especially—even to the white paper parcel in her mother-in-law's hand, which could be nothing but a loaf of cake or bread, and her cheeks flamed as fever could not have warmed them in receiving the kiss the old lady would upon no consideration have omitted.

"And your daughter too!" she faltered, smiling affectedly at Rebecca, who still hung back. "You are very kind to come so unceremoniously. Here is Ronald!" with a sigh of relief.

She had great confidence in her husband's ability to circumvent all sorts of trouble, and he justified it on this occasion by taking his mother on his arm after a brief but kindly greeting, and leading her into a small inner room. The dinner guests were in full sight through the arched doorway, and Rebecca noted the covert but meaning smile exchanged by some of the younger members of the party, particularly Mrs. Mebane's shrug as she muttered something behind her fan to her other married daughter.

"I expected to find you in bed, my dear," said Mrs. Hartley, apologetically, to the beautiful daughter-in-law, who had accepted the seat set for her, by Ronald, at his mother's right hand.

"I was little indisposed yesterday, but I am quite well now, thank you," answered Julie, abstractedly. Dinner would be served in a very few minutes, and what was then to be done with these—I am afraid she said—"horrid people!"

"Now that she has seen for herself that you are convalescent, Julie love, mother will, I am sure, excuse you—will not detain you any longer from your friends," said Ronald, in the most natural way imaginable.

And with an inward ejaculation of gratitude the pretty bride jumped up.

"Maybe I ought not to be staying here—pleasant as it is!"

She uttered the falsehood as people generally do fashionable fibs, unblushingly, and more suavely than she would have spoken an agreeable truth.

"These formal dinners are great bores," she ran on, in a confidential undertone; "but one has to submit to them—for the good of society, I suppose. We are going out to Lavender Lodge—the name of a felicitous impromptu—very soon. There will be real satisfaction in seeing you there, away from all this parade and vanity. Good-bye, then, for a little while!"

Ronald's eyes followed her fondly as she tripped away, and a proud smile lingered in them when he resumed his talk with his mother.

"I am very sorry she is engaged this evening. Mrs. Mebane's invitations were issued before we returned, and she is a bit of a despot, in a kindly way. Julie's tastes are more simple than are those of the rest of the family, but being the most amiable creature alive she submits to their requirements."

"Have you dined?" queried Rebecca, who had not opened her lips until now, only sat up very straight in her chair and taken observations.

"No; dinner has not been announced yet."

"But it will be directly—when we are gone," finished his sister, without a symptom of sarcasm in her tone or look. "Mother, we are keeping him from his friends, and them from their dinner. Come!"

The widow made a movement to unwrap the oaks, which was frustrated by her daughter's capture of the parcel and determined march toward a side-door. Still meek, and more bewildered than ever, the poor lady followed, attended by Ronald, to the front entrance. There, withdrawn from the curious eyes in the parlour, she put her arm about his neck, standing on tiptoe to do so.

"You won't forget or cease to love your old mother, will you, dear?"

"Good heavens, mother, what a question! What have I ever done to merit such an insinuation? You surely do not blame me for showing decent respect to my wife's relatives?"

"She does not," Rebecca interfered, to avert the scene threatened by her mother's working features.

"She never blamed you in her life, Ronald. I will explain everything to her. There is our omnibus, mother! Hurry, or we shall miss it!"

"I would put you in, but you see—" said Ronald, looking at his evening-dress and thin boots. "We see," returned his sister, fairly dragging her charge away with her.

"You are a veritable Napoleon in some matters," said Julie to her spouse, that night. "How cleverly you contrived the speedy exit of our mal-apropos visitors this evening! I lost my presence of mind entirely—came near fainting when they made their appearance. Mamma gave private orders at once to keep dinner back, but, altogether, it was a mortifying occurrence all round."

"Embarrassing, but hardly mortifying," returned Ronald, very gravely. "I trust I shall never be ashamed of my best friends—be tempted to disown my mother and sister."

It cost him such an effort to take this stand that his self-esteem—depressed by the recollection of his mother's clinging embrace and swimming eyes—began to mount slowly in the contemplation of his heroic fidelity to his early benefactors.

"Certainly not!" responded Julie, in quick alarm, at the prospect of a lecture. "But I do hope they did not fancy themselves alighted—or anything!"

"They hardly expected to be invited to your mother's dinner-party. But, my love, when we get into our own home we must never omit them. They must be as much at home there as we are."

With which declaration of rights the matrimonial dialogue ended.

"He will change his mind—never fear!" was Mrs. Mebane's consolation when Julie repeated this, confidentially. "He will be wiser in the ways of the world by-and-by. Shabby relatives are not a desirable appendage to a handsome establishment. Papa's main objection to your marriage was Mr. Hartley's family associations, although we had no idea then that they were so very exceptionable. Only be careful not to provoke Ronald into taking their part. Be polite and friendly whenever you meet them, but discourage such familiarities as their visit of last evening."

At the end of two years Ronald removed with his wife and child from the parental mansion to one in the same neighbourhood, as handsome in finish and appointments, though less spacious. This was Mr. Mebane's gift to his daughter, and being one who was averse to covering up his meritorious deeds he presented her with the papers transferring the property to her, her heirs and assigns, at the christening of his grandson and namesake. It was a proud occasion to the youthful mother.

Papa had quite forgiven her former disobedience and took so much notice of Ronald, and was so pleased that they called baby after him! But how could she do otherwise, loving and revering him as she did, dear, dear papa?

No formal invitation was sent to Lavender Lodge.

"Shall I direct one to your mother?" Julie had asked, looking up from the pile of satiny envelopes on her desk as Ronald inspected her list.

"No-o!" he replied, slowly. "Mother is an old-fashioned body, and she would feel out of her element among your guests. I'll speak to her about it before Thursday. I wish I could steal more time for visiting her. I haven't been near her for a fortnight."

"She must understand how busy you are, my dear," the fair scribe made wifely response. "No body can accuse you of a lack of attention to your mother. I only hope our boy may be as exemplary a son!"

She believed that she spoke honestly. Had not Ronald sent a new bombazine to his mother, and a sewing-machine to Rebecca at Christmas, and wouldn't he have dined with them in the holidays had she been able to accompany him? Didn't he go to see her almost every Sunday, if he had only time for a five minutes' call?

So she finished directing her invitations, and the next time Ronald visited his mother, which was not until the Tuesday before the important Thursday, he "spoke" of the fête after this wise:

"By the way, we are going to invest that wonderful boy with his name in regular style the day after to-morrow. The grandparents meditate making a fine affair of it, I believe. I suppose the business savours too strongly of the pomps and vanities for us to hope for your countenance, mother. Julie asked me to mention the subject to you."

"You have decided upon a name, then?" said Rebecca, to give the widow time to reconsider the impulse that lighted her face into a smile at the imagination of the christening—a feast made in honour of Ronald's child!

"Yes, Julie gives him her father's name."

There was no verbal comment, but Mrs. Hartley sighed plaintively.

She had a habit of sighing, and dropping ill-timed tears, that irked her son, while he strove to excuse

these melancholy exhibitions by reminding himself that she was growing old and childish. He was fretted now at what he construed into an implied reproach of his wife.

"As if a mother had not the right to call her child by whatever name she pleased. Mother was unreasonable in her prejudice—fast verging upon dotage."

Rebecca gave him a neat parcel when he was going away.

"Take our love to your wife and kiss the baby. We shall think of him on Thursday, although we shall not be with you."

Whereupon Mrs. Hartley added her gift—a box containing the gold and coral necklace her rich brother had given Ronald, his namesake, when an infant.

"I have kept it for your first-born, dear," she said, her eyes growing very wet.

Rebecca's present was a robe, beautifully made, and trimmed with the finest lace her purse allowed her to purchase.

"You don't suppose she meant it for a christening-robe, do you?" said Julie, anxiously, when she had shaken out and examined it.

"I have no doubt of it," returned Ronald. "It is very handsome—isn't it? It was kind in Rebecca to bestow so much pains upon this."

"It is very neat," Julie assented, cheerfully generous. "Very suitable for a morning dress. But baby's robe came home from Madame Lingerie's last week. It is the most elegant ever sent out from her establishment. Mamma ordered it, and you know what her taste is. She insisted too upon paying the bill. I don't see how I can let the darling wear this one—pretty as it is for a home-made article—without detracting from his good looks, and offending her."

"Please yourself, my love," was Ronald's concession to this reasonable statement.

Then he produced the cord, which Julie exclaimed at as "an interesting relic."

"How queer to think that you ever really wore it, darling."

The "darling" laughed, and rightly surmising that she would think it "queerer" still were he to propose the display of the relic upon the person of his son and her heir, he refrained from hinting what he felt were his mother's wishes with regard to it. What did it matter since she would not be at the christening how the child was dressed, so long as Julie was satisfied?

By Rebecca's management the cottagers did not pay their first visit to Ronald's house until the removal and settlement were fairly accomplished.

They were so lucky as to find the mistress of the establishment alone. Not sorry of an opportunity to show off her new toy, she conducted them from basement to attic, and put the finishing touch to her affability by pressing them to stay to luncheon.

"She is quite another creature when removed from her mother's influence," said Mrs. Hartley, in triumph, and the less sanguine Rebecca did not dissent from the favourable judgment.

Within the week the widow repeated the call, without her daughter. Julie was in the parlour, surrounded by a circle of morning visitors.

"She did not introduce me to one of them!" sighed Mrs. Hartley, in relating her adventure to her only confidant. "And after saying a careless 'Ah, good-morning!' to me when I entered, and asking me to sit down, she did not look at or speak to me for the next hour at least. I know everybody present mistook me for some seamstress or washer-woman who had called upon business. I waited until the room was clear of other company, then took my leave very haughtily, for I meant her to see that I was offended. I haven't had a chance to say a word to you, I declare!" she said, when I got up. 'But between relatives there should be no ceremony.' She offered no other apology for her rudeness. Times have changed woefully since I was young."

"Times have changed," said the sensible Rebecca; "and we must accommodate ourselves to them. Ronald's way and ours parted long ago, mother. It is only wise in us to acknowledge this fact, and keep ourselves where he and popular opinion would place us—in the background. Not that I find fault with him or with Julie. If I were in their situation I might act in the same way. Human nature is the same everywhere, and poverty, if not a crime, is the reverse of ornamental."

After this candid expression of her views and philosophy, the intercourse between the two households was confined almost entirely to Ronald's fortnightly, sometimes monthly visits.

He was a man of many engagements, professional and social. His connection with the Mebanes had proved exceedingly profitable. The retired merchant had maintained a steady hold of his interests from the date of his marriage, and was pleased to express in many ways his approval of his conduct and abilities.

In view of his already heavy expenses and increasing family, of Julie's usefulness for any other



[THE OLD LOVE.]

sphere than that which she now occupied, and the imperative necessity that he should continue to hold in the eyes of the world the ground he had gained, a disagreement with his wife's father was to be avoided by all justifiable means, and his good will to be courted by the same. If the happiness of the parent, whose love was his beyond the chance of alienation, and whose scanty means he no longer needed, seemed to his ripened judgment a matter of secondary importance, he was, as his sister aptly put the case, not to be blamed for being human.

From their very different standpoints Mrs. Mebane and the pale seamstress had arrived at one conclusion with respect to this matter, viz: the extreme undesirability of cultivating relatives who are many degrees poorer or less fashionable than one's self. If any sentimental philanthropist is disposed to cavil at their conclusion he is hereby invited to investigate for himself the unprinted family history of successful men, the architects of their own fortunes and fame, and of lucky women who have secured prizes in the mart matrimonial.

Ronald may not have been better than his associates. He was certainly no worse.

When little Mebane Hartley was one year old he was sent to his grandfather's country-seat in charge of a French *bonne*, supervised by Mrs. Mebane, while his parents took a six weeks' vacation from the wearing cares of business and society.

"We shall be on the wing constantly, and a letter would hardly catch us at any point," said Ronald to his sister, at his brief farewell call. "Moreover, our route is still uncertain. But if you should need me—if any thing should happen while I am gone—you had better apply to Mr. Mebane for our probable address. He will be tolerably well advised as to our movements, since we shall want to hear frequently from the boy."

"He does not care to hear from us at all!" thought Rebecca to herself, that evening, dwelling longer than was good for her peace of mind upon her brother's careless adieu, and contrasting them with the fond leavetakings of other days, when his injunctions that they should write often and at length were enforced by the declaration that the delay of a day in the receipt of his home letters made him miserable and useless for work or enjoyment. "Yet we have not altered. We would serve him faithfully and zealously now as ever, if he required our help and affection, which he does not. I ought to be thankful for his prosperity, but, oh, dear! this is a tiresome world we live in!"

She was sitting in the starlight upon the doorstep, too weary in body and sick at heart to take pleasure in the perfumed air breathing over the lavender and thyme beds, or to note who approached

the gate, when a tall figure with a perceptible stoop in the shoulders came up the walk and paused before her.

"This is Miss Hartley, I believe?"

She replied with a variation of the inquiry:

"Is this Mr. Calton?"

His wife has been dead a year. His business now was the same he had broached in the letter she had answered ten years before. He made this known in a matter-of-fact way that accorded well with his years and the dignity of widowhood.

"Before I answer come into the light and see how much older and plainer I have grown," responded prudent Rebecca, leading the way to the parlour. "When people reach our years they ought to look at things as they really are—be perfectly truthful in their dealings with one another. Mine has been a quiet but a busy life, and every year has left a mark upon me."

When she had placed herself in the strong glare of the unshaded gas-burner he smiled and bent his uncovered head that she might observe his partial baldness and grizzled hair.

"I am still your senior by half a score of years, dear Rebecca. The afternoon and evening of existence have their joys as well as the morning."

Ronald was at home a week before he could snatch a moment from business which he felt he could conscientiously devote to the cultivation of filial and fraternal graces.

He did not write to his mother at first, because he intended to call so soon, subsequently because he did not care that she should know how long he had been near without visiting her. She was inclined to be unreasonable in her old age and could not understand what a slave he was obliged to be to his business.

He drove out to Lavender Lodge after sunset on the eighth day, which was Sunday. Could this be the right street? for he failed at one glance to recognize the house.

The front paling were gone; the roof that used to slope above his chamber was half demolished; the windows yawned shutterless and sashless, and the once neat garden was choked up breast-high with rubbish and lumber. Not a living creature was upon the premises; and having assured himself of this he rang an agitated peal upon the door bell of the house opposite, wherein dwelt a friend of his mother.

Moved to unusual explicitness by his ashy complexion and faltering tongue, the neighbour told her story in a few sentences. Rebecca had been married two weeks before.

"Mr. Calton would not hear of an engagement longer than a month," said the narrator. "It seemed

providential that, while they were debating the question, Mrs. Hartley had an excellent offer for her house, and the purchaser wanted to take possession at once. They wrote to you twice, Mr. Hartley, but I suppose the letters miscarried. The wedding was strictly private, but I have seldom seen a happier couple. From what your mother told me I gathered that it was an old attachment. Mr. Calton offered himself to Rebecca ten or eleven years ago, but she did not consider herself justified by the circumstances of the family in accepting him, although she was partial to him even then. She looked really young and pretty in her handsome travelling-dress. She would not be married in white. She will make him an excellent wife and Mrs. Hartley seemed delighted at the thought of returning to her old home. Mr. Calton is your father's successor, you know."

Thanking her for the information she had supplied, Ronald said, "Good-evening," and drove back to his own house with a heart pained and burning beyond any anguish he had known since Mr. Mebane refused to give him his daughter.

Julie sympathized warmly in his resentment, if she did not in his wounded affection.

"After all you have done for them too!" she exclaimed, in a burst of indignation. "One would suppose that common gratitude, if not a sense of propriety, would have induced them to delay this preposterous movement until you could be consulted. Perhaps Rebecca feared lest you might oppose her marriage. It was a ridiculous step in a woman of her age. And what did she mean by saying that circumstances prevented her acceptance of her reverend wooer ten years ago?"

"I do not pretend to account for her eccentric sayings and doings," replied Ronald, curtly. "I, for one, never interfered with her love-projects, or with any others, for that matter. But I am grieved at my mother's conduct. It was settled long since that if she ever sought another home it should be in my house. As you say, this is all the reward I shall ever receive for my years of devotion to her comfort and happiness. Ah, well, if they can live without me I am certain I can exist without them."

"Entre nous," said Julie, next day, to her mother, "I regard the Reverend Luke as a benignant fairy. Ronald will feel relieved by their absence from town, when he has thought the matter over coolly. He could never have shaken them entirely off had they continued to live here."

She was a feminine Solomon, this small woman; for what are stepping-stones but eye-sores and stumbling-blocks when the need for them has passed.

THE END.



THE HEIRESS OF CLANRONALD.

CHAPTER V.

I had much rather see
A crested dragon, or a basilisk;
Both are less poison to my eyes and nature.

Dryden.

HOME to Ryhope Manor Sir Roger went, with this ugly secret locked up in his soul. The teeming wine-cellar was his only refuge; he drank till his conscience was numb, drank and revelled and gambled day and night.

But Lady Laura Pevensy, with her queenly grace and blonde curls and pearl-fair face and high-bred manner, made no objection. Sir Roger was, or would be a baronet, and she was willing to make him her husband.

The wedding was a grand affair. Half of Durham was feasted in the park, and the old manor was filled with noble guests.

Sir Roger Ryhope, thirteenth baronet of Ryhope Manor, was married to Lady Laura Pevensy and her golden dowry, and poor Marie lay forgotten beneath the black billows of the Rhone.

Forgotten?

For a brief time wine and excitement and the blandishments of his dowried bride silenced the young man's conscience. His father died, and he succeeded to his title. A son and heir was born. All things went well with him.

But his stately lady dropped her mask and revealed herself in her true character. She was a cruel and heartless woman, with a will as strong as fate itself. A sad life she led Sir Roger.

He soon began to think of poor Marie. All her gentleness and love came back to him. A yearning remorse pierced him like a knife. He left the manor and wandered to France, down to the little villa where they had lived so happily.

No one knew him, for in a few months Sir Roger had grown to be an old man; and from the old peasant-woman with whom Marie had once lived he heard her sad story.

A young nobleman had deceived her by a false marriage, and her brother finding it out, came to take her away from him. He left her on the bridge one evening, her brother did, and went to call a carriage to take her away, and when he returned she was gone. She drowned herself, of course, in her despair and sorrow, for nothing had been heard of her since.

The baronet listened with ashy lips, then turned away in silence. The handsome young man whom

[THE MASQUERADE.]

Roger had seen was her brother. Marie was true to him, and he had murdered her.

He went back to Ryhope, and thence to London with his wife for the season. What else could he do? What else but live and hide the awful secret in his heart? He was too cowardly to confess it, and he dared not end his own miserable life. So he lived an honoured peer, a man of influence, the father of two children.

Lady Laura grew impatient with her gloomy, ghastly husband. He spent his years in travel, in scholarly researches. She might as well have married the marble Apollo in her grand drawing-room. But Lady Laura had her consolations—her diamonds, her fine equipage, her mansion in St. James's, her villa in Switzerland—and, last of all, her lovers; or, as fashionable parlance has it, her gentlemen friends.

One of these was Captain Auguste Lamont, a young guardsman, and a passionate lover of Lady Laura in days gone by. Recently he had fallen to the good fortune of inheriting a peerage and a landed estate in the Highlands. He was Lord Raeburn, of Raeburn Castle now, and one of the handsomest men in the United Kingdom, so said the London fair ones.

On a golden September afternoon, many years after the date which opens our story, Lord Raeburn, and some dozen or more London gentlemen, were at Ryhope Manor for the shooting season.

There were plenty of ladies also, the Dowager Countess of Hereford, Lady Jane Stanhope and her two lovely daughters, and last, though by no means least, the Duchess of Clydesdale, who had accompanied her son, the young Marquis of Keith. The Duke of Clydesdale was an old, old man, too infirm to travel; but the duchess, still hale and hearty, always followed in the wake of her handsome son, for fear, as she told Lady Ryhope, in confidence, he might be trapped into a mésalliance—men were so stupid. So the Marquis of Keith, coming to Ryhope for the shooting season, it followed as a natural consequence that the duchess, his mother, should come too.

In her great delight Lady Ryhope planned a masked ball on a scale of extravagant magnificence. "My dear," remonstrated Sir Roger, mildly, when she announced the amount of her expenditure, "it looks like a sinful waste of money to expend so much—a handsome fortune on one ball."

Lady Laura's pink cheeks grew scarlet, and her blue-grey eyes flashed.

"Does it, indeed?" she retorted, keenly. "You are growing pious in your old age, it would seem, Sir Roger! Do you never indulge in any sinful extravagances, pray?"

The baronet winced perceptibly.

"Ah," continued his lady, with a heartless laugh, "that strikes home, does it? Now, please, Sir Roger, if you have grown weary of the world don't require me to imitate your example. I am fond of gaiety, fond of luxury—and remember 'tis my own money I am expending—my own."

"Expend what you like, Lady Ryhope," replied her husband, passing out from the magnificent boudoir in which her ladyship was seated, "I shall not object."

"I should think not," returned Lady Laura, watching him as he passed down the corridor, with a strange, lurid fire in her eyes.

His step was slow and dragging, his shoulders had a painful stoop, his face wore a look of fixed despair. The handsome lady's scarlet lips curled scornfully.

"What a poor, moping creature," she soliloquized; "he reminds one of a criminal on the eve of his execution. I wonder what secret it is that consumes him? But why should I care? I only wish it would do its work and rid me of him! Pah! that I should be fettered for life to such a clod! I, in the very bloom of my beauty!"

She arose from her velvet couch and stood erect before the great gilded mirror—a queenly figure, clad in an exquisitely embroidered robe, a face fair as a sea-shell, surrounded by flossy waves of abundant blonde hair. She was in the bloom of her beauty, this handsome, heartless Lady Laura.

The silken arras beyond her stirred, and parted, and a dark, blooming face looked in.

"Will your ladyship permit it?" spoke a musical voice.

Lady Ryhope started, and a vivid blush dyed her fair cheeks.

"Oh, Captain Lamont," she cried; "I beg your pardon, Lord Raeburn—"

"Nay," interposed the ex-guardsman, advancing into the boudoir, and bowing profoundly; "call me by the old name, I entreat, the name I bore in the happy, happy days—"

He paused, as if afraid to finish the sentence, and, folding his arms across his broad chest, stood in eloquent silence, his black, Spanish eyes full of smouldering fire.

Lady Ryhope flushed like a girl in her teens.

"My lord," she stammered, "why are you here? You know this is my private boudoir."

"And I am your old, old friend," he replied "Lady Laura, do not be cruel; do not banish me from your presence. I have ventured here to beg for one quiet hour, before the ball begins; to-morrow I leave

England, and years may pass before I return again."

Her cheeks whitened, and she put out her delicate hand with an imploring gesture.

He drew a velvet hassock to her feet, and threw himself upon it.

His was a lithe, graceful figure, replete with sinewy strength, and a face whose dark beauty was irresistible.

Even in the days when he was nothing but a penniless guardsman, the younger son of a younger son, Captain Auguste Lamont was a pet and a favourite in the boudoirs of many of the noblest women in England, and now that he was a peer, albeit a poverty-stricken one, his society was courted in the very highest circles.

But the handsome ex-captain was not a marrying man.

He liked his bachelor freedom; and with a perversity as senseless as it was wicked he held to his boyish fancy for Lady Laura Ryhope.

When he was just home from college he had fallen in love with Sir Burke Pevensy's lovely daughter; but Sir Burke was not slow in letting him know that his daughter was already bespoken; and more, that no such man as he need aspire to the honour of her hand.

But Captain Lamont aspired to the honour of her love, at any rate, and succeeded in winning it. They met clandestinely, and exchanged vows of eternal fidelity.

The captain was ordered to India, and on his return some three years after he found his faithless charmer the wife of Sir Roger Ryhope.

Most men would have abandoned the false fair one in disgust, but the fact that she was a baronet's wife seemed to make the young captain more ardent and in earnest.

He sought every means to win her notice, and to thrust himself in her society, and so far succeeded as to establish himself on the footing of a dear and confidential friend.

His furloughs were all spent at Ryhope Manor, or at the baronet's handsome London residence; and now that he had succeeded to a peerage and a Highland estate he came as an invited guest.

Madame Grundy's lynx eyes were on the handsome ex-guardsman, and her busy tongue whispered many a slanderous suspicion in regard to his intimacy with Lady Laura; but Lady Laura's rank and prestige defied Madame Grundy's slander; and the baronet, her husband, was too much preoccupied with his own misery and remorse to hear or see.

And now on the eve of the great ball he lay at her feet, his soft, Spanish eyes full of passionate admiration.

"Yes," he went on, "to-morrow I leave England, never to return, perhaps. Why should I? What has England or any other country in store for me now? I am an alien and a wanderer, a man without a hope or an aim in life. Ah, Laura!"

And he caught at the white, ringed hand that lay on the crimson velvet cushion within his reach, carried away by the remembrance of a passion which had once been strong.

"Laura, was it well to break the old vows and send me adrift as you did?"

The handsome matron trembled from head to foot.

Love lives eternal in some woman's hearts, though pride and ambition may keep it in abeyance.

"Don't!" she entreated, withdrawing her hand. "Have mercy, Auguste, and do not call up the dead past."

"Dead," he continued, passionately, "but not forgotten. Laura, why did you throw me over? Is fidelity a virtue unknown to women?"

"Nay, I only wish it were. I was forced to renounce you, Auguste, as you know. My father willed that I should wed Sir Roger, and his will is strong as fate," she replied.

"But not as strong as love," he cried, triumphantly, "and my love will win you yet. Nay, do not deny it—if you were free, if he was out of the way, you would be mine to-morrow."

She dropped her face into her hands, her cheeks glowing with shame, yet her weak heart throbbing with wild delight.

"Oh, go away!" she entreated. "I am the mother of grown-up children—do not talk to me so."

"You are the loveliest woman in the universe, and the best beloved," he replied, pressing his lips to her fair hand; "but I obey. Laura, farewell."

He disappeared as he had come, through the silken arras, his light, stealthy tread making no sound on the velvet carpets, and Lady Ryhope was left alone.

She arose, panting with excitement.

"What an idiot I am," she muttered, "I, a peer's

daughter, a baronet's wife, long past her youth, listening to such nonsense. What an idiot I am."

She rang her bell furiously, and her maid appeared.

"Matihl," commanded Lady Ryhope, "dress me now, in purple velvet, with the old point lace, and diamonds, all the diamonds you can find, Matihl. I am Marie Antoinette to-night, you know, and I want to be gorgeous."

And Matihl, with a Frenchwoman's nod and shrug of comprehension, set about her task.

It was twelve o'clock at night.

The bells in Ryhope harbour were striking the hour, and the great clock in a windy turret of the old manor tolled it out in solemn reverberations.

The ancient manor, with its bristling chimney, and mullioned windows, was one blaze of light. Wreaths of evergreen and scarlet blooms trailed over the arched doorway, coloured lamps flashed amid the green boughs of the oaks and beeches that lined the long avenue, and twinkled amid the shrubbery like gaudy fireflies; and everywhere through the grand halls, in the grounds and gardens, the masked dancers moved to and fro.

The ceremony of the ball was over and the guests roved about at random, prince and peasant, high-born dame and humble working girl, all joining hands and uniting in the same round dance.

Lady Ryhope was growing weary of the gaiety, and in her heavy velvet and ermine, with the shimmer of diamonds in her blonde hair and in the billows of her rare old lace, she retired to a rustic arbour, and, sitting herself down, threw aside her mask.

Not ten paces off, beneath the shelter of a splendid rose-tree, stretching his lazy length upon a rustic seat, lay Captain Lamont, the Lord of Raeburn Castle.

He wore the costume of Henry of Navarre, but his hat, with its white plume, lay on the grass at his feet, and he had thrown aside his mask.

The night winds tossed about his abundant black locks, and stirred the long silken bands that rippled down upon his breast, and his dark, brilliant face looked like some rare old painting.

But the handsome captain was not in good spirits, as one could see from the expression of his soft, almond-shaped eyes.

He looked worried and irresolute, and muttered under his breath:

"A danced fix for a fellow to be in," he said, biting his moustache fiercely, "and no possible chance of getting out of it. Heels over head in debt, and not a penny to be got out of that cursed old Highland castle! What's the good of having the old ghost-nest, since a fellow can't sell it? And before the week's out every Jew in London will be down upon me. What shall I do? That last run at the Derby ruined me. There's only one chance, and that's to make a run for it."

He rose to his feet, and, striking a match on the heel of his shapely boot, lighted a cigar, which he smoked fiercely.

A rustling step attracted his attention, and he turned just in time to see Lady Ryhope pass.

Her royal velvet trailed in gorgeous splendour after her, and the diamonds amid her blonde curls and on her rounded arms flashed and blazed in the semi-gloom like living constellations.

The ex-guardsman's Spanish eyes lit up as he watched her.

"The very finest woman in England," he ejaculated, "I wonder if she could not be brought to help me? That dead-and-alive husband of hers might, if he would. What an income he has! Wonder if he'd grant a fellow a loan of a few thousands? Heavens, how I wish he'd 'shuffle this mortal coil,' and give me the chance of stepping into his shoes. I could do it easy enough. Lady Laura was always sweet on me—women generally are. Something must be done," he went on. "I'm opposed to being run out of England, and go's the word, unless I can raise the wind 'twixt this and Saturday night. By Jove, I'll try Lady Laura—I will—what's the use of being a favourite with the women if a fellow doesn't gain by it?"

He tossed his half-smoked cigar into a clump of evergreen, replaced his hat with its nodding plume, donned his mask, and looked Henry of Navarre to perfection.

A dozen fairy masks flitted after him as he strolled leisurely down the central avenue, but he did not notice them. He went on till he reached the garden, and stood before the secluded bower in which Lady Ryhope sat. She started up at his approach, and made an effort to replace her mask, but he interposed.

"Nay, please do not," she entreated, "I have come to speak my last good-bye. Laura, do not deny me the privilege at one last look at your face."

The baronet's wife sat down, in a tremor of excitement.

"So you are really going away?" she asked, vainly struggling to keep her voice calm.

"Going away," he echoed, mournfully; "to-morrow I go, never to return."

"May I ask why?" her lips growing white as she put the question.

Lord Raeburn sighed, and looked dreamily out into the darkness.

"Well, it is better, perhaps," he replied, "better that I should leave England, and yet—"

He hesitated, and then turned his brilliant face full upon her.

"Laura," he said, "you are my friend, my one true friend in this wide world; I will tell you the truth. I have been unfortunate, imprudent, extravagant. I'll speak plainly; I'm in debt, and there's no one to help me. I must go."

Lady Ryhope sat silent.

Presently she looked up, her face flushed and bashful like a girl's.

"Would you—"

She hesitated.

"You won't be offended—but would you let me help you? It would be such a pleasure."

He caught her hand and carried it to his lips. She was so good, so generous, it would be a pleasure to receive help from her dear hands.

Lady Ryhope meditated an instant. She had plenty of money at her command—an open account at her husband's banking-house.

"To-morrow at noon," she said at last, "come to me, and you shall have all you need, and then," she added, playfully tapping his arm with her jewelled fan, "let me hear no more talk of going away."

At that instant Sir Roger went strolling down a garden-path near at hand, the painful stoop in his shoulders, his white, blank face looking almost ghastly in the gloom.

Lady Ryhope's scarlet lip curled, and she turned away with a shiver of disgust.

"Ah," sighed the captain, "what happiness falls to some men, and men too who do not seem to appreciate what they possess. Laura, why was not I born Sir Roger Ryhope, instead of the miserable man that I am?"

"Heaven forbid that you should have been!" responded her ladyship, passionately. "If there is a man on earth I detest that man is Sir Roger Ryhope. But go now, she added, blushing at her own imprudence, "leave me Lord Raeburn, till to-morrow; the ball will soon be over now; I'm tired and wish to be alone."

And, bowing profoundly, the captain obeyed; and as he vanished in the illuminated shrubbery Lady Ryhope leaned back with a weary sigh; but a rustling in the foliage near at hand attracted her attention; and looking up, she beheld a weird, wild creature standing in the shadow of an acacia tree, a creature so horribly unearthly that she barely repressed a shriek of terror.

CHAPTER VI.

He said, and raised his skinny hand

As in defiance to high Heaven.

And stretched his long lean finger forth,

And spake aloud the words of power.

Southey.

THE horrible creature advanced, with a sinuous, serpentlike motion, till it stood within a yard or two of the seat which Lady Ryhope occupied. The bent and crooked figure, clad in grotesque garments of many colours, appeared to be that of a man; its face was dry and wrinkled, and yellow like parchment, and its small eyes burned beneath its shaggy mane of hair like living coals. In one shrivelled hand it carried a long staff, in the other a dice box, and from the girdle at its waist depended a well-filled leathern pouch.

"Will the beautiful lady have her fortune told?" it asked, in a hollow, unearthly voice, advancing still nearer.

Lady Ryhope recoiled in terrified disgust, and motioned it away; but the glittering eyes held her with a terrible fascination.

"Pretty lady have her fortune told?" it entreated, dropping on one knee, and clattering the dice-box.

A silly feminine desire to hear what this strange creature had to tell took possession of Lady Ryhope's heart. She would like to know what the future held for her. Her better judgment urged her to resist, but she yielded.

"Go on," she said, taking a piece of gold from her pocket and tossing it at the creature's feet; "let me hear, but first tell me who and what you are."

"Men call me the 'Egyptian Wizard,'" croaked the fortune-teller. "I come from the far East, and read the future lives of men, and sell them charms—charms that will prolong life and charms that will end life," he continued, with a horrible chuckle, touching the pouch at his belt with one skinny finger.

Lady Ryhope shivered with terror. The lamps were burning low, the guests were departing, the

music sounded faint and far away; but a horrid fascination chained her like a weird spell. She put out her fair hand.

The wizard scanned it narrowly, then he shook and rattled his dice.

"I see, I see," he began, "your life is incomplete, the end is in the future. You are wedded but you do not love, a sad lot for so lovely a lady. You married the wrong man. Ah, here comes the right one—tall and straight and handsome. But the first one stands in his way!"

Lady Ryhope grew scarlet and jerked away her hand, but the instant after she put it out again.

"Well," she questioned, uneasily, "what will the end be?"

The wizard chuckled and rattled his dice.

"There he stands, right in the way," he went on, "and he'll stand there till the crack of doom if we don't move him. My lady, we must put him out of the way. This will do it, the charm in here will do it," he said, tapping his pouch significantly.

"What do you mean?" demanded her ladyship.

He unfasted the pouch with alacrity and poured its contents on the grass. There were curious gems and coins, and tablets covered with cabalistic characters, and two or three curious metallic boxes. One of these he took up.

"That would do it," he said, in a significant whisper, "that would put him out of the way for ever—'tis a white powder, sure and silent—one little sprinkle means death! But it has another secret," he added, hastily, "rubbed on the skin it makes it as fair as snow. Ladies buy it for that—'tis used in all the Eastern harems; it makes the face like a fresh rose. Won't the noble lady buy a box or two of the poor old wizard?"

Lady Ryhope had grown white from the awful thought that had flashed unbidden through her mind. She struggled to her feet, gasping for breath.

"No," she said, "go away with your horrible things—go away!"

The wizard gathered them up with alacrity, but he retained one box in his hand.

"Farewell, my beautiful lady," he said, smirking and bowing, "and I'll leave this as a keepsake, if you never need it."

He put the box upon the garden seat, and before Lady Ryhope could utter a syllable he had disappeared.

She stood like one fascinated, her gaze riveted on the little shining box. Presently she advanced, and took it up in her fingers. It was of white, silverlike metal, and the lid was covered with mystic signs. She inserted her finger in the crevice of the lid, and it flew open with a snap.

The wizard had told the truth. The box was filled with white powder, which emitted a sharp, pungent odour. Lady Ryhope closed it hastily.

"One little sprinkle means death," she repeated, in an awed whisper.

Her very lips blanched, a bluish pallor crept to her pink cheeks. She made a movement as if to hurl it from her; then, hesitating and trembling, she hid it in her bosom.

The tempter had succeeded. Lady Ryhope stood on the verge of an awful precipice.

The music clashed out in a grand closing symphony; far away over the rolling downs and mist-crowned hills the dawn was breaking, the dawn of Heaven's clear, sinless day. The guilty woman shaded her eyes from its light, and crept through the dowy silence, like one afraid to be seen.

CHAPTER VII.

How oft the sight of means to do ill deeds
Makes ill deeds done. Shakespeare.

THE September sunlight lies warm and yellow on the brown Durham hills, and flashes in golden gleams through the russet foliage of the oaks in Ryhope Park.

The hens in the great barnyard cackle lazily, and the broad grain-fields repose in beautiful silence; the orchards hang laden with mellow treasures, and from the fading blossoms along the garden walks ascends a sweet aroma, like the lingering memory of a dear friend.

It is an afternoon for peace, love, content; an hour to hush even the most cruel passions into a feeling of tender regret; an hour in which no dark deed should be committed.

Sin beneath that opal sky, that misty, autumn sun, would wear its blackest hue, a hue that many a remorseful tear would fail to whiten. Yet sin, ay—crime, in its most horrible form, is being plotted at Ryhope Manor.

Lady Laura Ryhope stands in the centre of her private dressing-room in full riding costume. Her long habit of finest blue velvet, the blue that suits her peculiar complexion so well, trails out upon the Turkish carpet; her feet are encased in dainty high-heeled boots; a hat, adorned with a long, curling

plume, only half conceals the redundance of her blonde braids and ringlets; and on a chair near at hand lie a pair of excellent gauntlets with diamond buttons at the wrists and an elegant jewelled riding-whip.

An elegant and stately lady this wife of Roger, even more beautiful than she was the day he married her, with no suggestions of age on her downy cheeks or in her clear sea-blue eyes.

She has dismissed her French maid, and now she stands before the long mirror, and surveys her own graceful figure with a sigh of satisfaction.

She is very proud of her beauty, very fond of her own fair, well-preserved face.

A voice from below attracts her attention—a lazy, musical voice, singing a fragment from a new opera. She goes to the window and looks down.

The scene below is a gay one.

On the long terrace in front of the manor are some dozen ladies and gentlemen, all in out-door dress.

The Duchess of Clydedale is there in her grand drab moirée, and her son, the handsome marquis, strolls up and down, eating at the dahlia heads with his whip.

Eustace, the baronet's son, at home for a short respite from Eton, is already in his stirrups, and impatient to be off; and the baronet himself stands upon the green grass, his white, despairing face turned toward the western hills.

May is at his side, her white hands clasping his arm, all her golden curls fluttering in the breeze as she lifts her sweet face to his.

"Papa dear," she pleads, "do ride, won't you? It will do you good. You are looking so pale and tired."

Sir Roger shakes his head drearily.

"No, don't ask me, dear," he replies. "I'm in no mood for gaiety; but you shall go—see, there is your pony all ready. Kiss papa good-bye."

She kisses him, but not good-bye. Her white hands tighten their clasp on his arm.

"If you stay, so will I," she says; "there, papa, don't say a word, please. I really wish to stay with you; shan't I be gone from you off to that horrid French school in a day or two? Let me be with you while I may."

Sir Roger smiles fondly down upon her. She is the one comfort of his dreary life.

"I'm sure I've no desire to send you from me, May," he replies, "but I don't like you to lose the pleasure of the ride."

"'Tis much nicer to stay with you," cries May, "and I'll have my gallop in the morning."

They stroll on, down the sloping declivity that leads to the river; and Lady Ryhope, from the window above, watches them, her full lips curling slightly.

The baronet makes but a poor figure, with his stooping shoulders and listless, despairing face; the stately lady regards him with scorn, yet his devotion to May, his daughter, fills her heart with something like indignant jealousy.

From the hour of her birth Lady Ryhope has been indifferent to her little daughter. Eustace is her pride, her idol.

She watches them, as they stroll along, father and daughter, so alike in feature and disposition, so fondly devoted to each other.

"He cares for nothing else," she mutters under her breath; "no one but her—one but May. I fairly hate the sight of both of them! He'll cheat my boy of his right too, to enlarge her dowry."

Her eyes wander toward Eustace, sitting his horse like a prince, and brighten with motherly affection.

The one redeeming quality this cruel, unnatural woman possesses is her love for her son.

But the lazy, musical voice breaks forth again and under the arching oak boughs a horseman canters.

The voice and the sight of the horseman appear to thrill the lady to her inmost heart. Her cheeks bloom like a rose, her eyes droop, her bosom heaves tumultuously.

The horseman is Captain Lamont, Lord of Raeburn Castle.

He canters along on his superb Arab, looking so handsome and happy in the September sunlight. His debts are all cancelled, he has abandoned all thought of leaving England, and is an invited guest at the manor.

He glances up as if impelled by some subtle impulse, and sees Lady Ryhope at the window. A brilliant smile lights his black eyes, he nods with slow grace, and throws a kiss from the tips of his shapely fingers.

Lady Ryhope blushes like a girl and withdraws as Sir Roger and May come strolling in sight again. Sir Roger, with his bent shoulders and dragging step and white, remorseful face. Such a contrast to the handsome horseman!

Lady Ryhope looks down from behind the silken curtains comparing the two as Sir Roger pauses to answer some remark made by Lord Raeburn.

Her cheeks bloom hotly, her lips quiver. Ah, Heaven, if she were only free!

By some strange freak of memory the wizard's words come back to her.

"You have married the wrong man. There he stands. We must put him out of the way!"

She turns sharply toward an ebony desk that occupies one corner and presses her finger on a silver knob.

A tiny drawer flies open as if by magic. It is filled with jewels, unset diamonds and rubies, and golden perfume bottles; and amid all is the small silver-white box.

Lady Ryhope takes it out with a shudder and turns it over in her white fingers. It must possess some mystic charm, for since the hour it came into her possession she has known no peace. A dozen times a day, drawn by some irresistible fascination, she goes and looks at it. Even at the midnight hour she has risen from her pillow and taken it from its hiding-place.

"One little sprinkle means death!" she whispers, in a breathless kind of way, and her cheeks blanch and she shivers from head to foot.

"Mamma, mamma," calls the ringing voice of Eustace from below, "will you never be ready? Come, the sun will soon be out of sight."

She conceals the little box in her bosom and hurries down to the terrace.

Lord Raeburn springs from his saddle to receive her.

"The white mare is out," he whispers, "and you ride with me."

She smiles assent and he assists her to mount, while the others dispose of themselves according to their fancy.

Eustace gallops off between the two fair daughters of Lady Stanhope; the duchess mounts into her pony phaeton, and the marquis looks regretfully toward little May, still hanging on her father's arm.

"You should not have disappointed me," he says, shaking his whip at her.

May smiles and blushes, and the marquis bows, and the brilliant cavalcade sweeps away, headed by Lord Raeburn and Lady Laura.

Down the sloping hill, up the green shore of the Wear, past the towering lighthouse, past the village, out into the silent country lanes.

Lady Ryhope is an admirable rider, and they gallop like the wind, on and on, through the sweet-scented woods, till their pulses bound and the blood runs riot in their veins.

In the silver dusk they return to the manor, cantering side by side, the reins hanging on their horses' necks. Lady Ryhope's cheek is like the heart of a rose, her eyes flash fire.

At the door her husband meets her and offers his hand to assist her up the steps, her sad, kind, scholarly husband. She takes his hand, then drops it with a strong shudder, and, rushing past him, hurries up to her own room.

In an hour the great bell tolls in the turret, and the gay company gather in the dining room, with its wax-lights and velvet hangings and snowy damask and glittering silver.

Sir Roger sits at the head of his table, a thoughtful, generous host, but the pallor of despair never leaves his face.

The courses are many and abundant, then come the rare wines and dainty delicacies. Last of all, Lady Laura calls for a salver of tiny crystal goblets and a flask of rare old vintage, something, she says, equal to the nectar of the gods.

She fills the goblets with her own graceful hands and passes them to her guests, smiling graciously as they drink to her health.

"Sir Roger," she says, presently, filling a glass and raising it in her fingers by the dainty stem, "you rarely taste wine, but let me persuade you to drink this—'tis something exquisite—is it not so, Lord Keith?"

The marquis expresses himself enraptured with this mellow old wine, and takes the little goblet from her ladyship's hand and passes it down to the baronet.

He receives it indifferently and carries it to his lips.

Lady Ryhope, watching him with her glittering blue eyes, utters an involuntary cry and puts out her hand in an frantic kind of way.

But Sir Roger has drained the glass, and he looks up inquiringly.

His wife's face will never be whiter or more ghastly in the grave. Her teeth chatter, she shivers like an aspen.

"Oh, it is a pain," she stammers, as the guests rise and gather about her. "I am subject to it; let me go and it will soon be over."

The ex-guardsman hastens to her side, and supports her from the room, and up the oaken staircase.

On the landing above he turns and looks into her face, with his great luminous eyes. She shudders and turns from him.

"You are free!" he murmurs, under his breath.

She utters an awful cry, throws up both hands and falls at his feet in a dead swoon.

(To be continued.)

MARRIED IN MASK.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE child stood beside her father endeavouring to comprehend this conversation between him and her mother.

At last she ventured to suggest that her repertoire of words did not contain this word of many syllables.

"A lady's peculiarities," explained her mother, "are what she does, thinks, speaks, dresses in, eats, where she goes to church, and all that sort of thing. Do you comprehend, little chatter-box?"

"My peculiarities are cakes," said Bessie, triumphantly.

She felt that she had mastered the subject, and away she ran and they saw no more of her.

After a time, however, they heard loud laughter in the library.

It was repeated, and then little Bessie came running in with her eyes full of intelligence.

"Oh, mamma," she exclaimed, "grandpa told me all her peculiarities."

This announcement created no little dismay in the mind of the young mother. She had never dreamed that the child would betray her curiosity to the master of the house.

"But I didn't promise to keep still," said the child, apologetically. "And I'm glad I didn't, for grandpa says she's lovely, and gray-headed, and the sweetest woman that ever walked, and she's good to the poor, and she puts lots of things on Christmas trees for good children, and when she smiles everybody is happy, and she works worsted patterns beautiful, and she goes to Dr. Dean's church, and dresses very plain and paints flowers perfectly splendid, and plays on the parlour organ, and has blue eyes just like mine, and loves oil paintings; oh, and ever so many things."

The little girl stopped to get breath, and Sam laughed inordinately.

"That's a pretty good character he gives his sister," said the young father to his wife. "She must be a good deal like you. The worsted work, the painted flowers and the parlour organ are you all over. The plain dressing, too, is my wife all over; such quiet colours, you know, Bessie. And as to the poor, just tell me what you did with that cheque I gave you last week? I know some old or infirm woman has got half of it."

"Do you think I am like that?" inquired Bessie.

"Yes, particularly that part of the description 'when she smiles everybody is happy.'"

The young wife laid her head on the shoulder of her husband and was silent, holding his hand. She knew that Sam never flattered. What he said in kindness was the language of his heart. They were very happy—too happy, she thought, for this world.

But the opinion her husband had expressed that she resembled this expected sister of his father made her curious regarding her. It was the only relative Nicholas Rudd had ever condescended to mention. He had maintained perfect silence regarding his father's family.

Before many days had elapsed after Bessie's disclosure to her mother the old gentleman introduced the subject to her in person. He assured the young wife that although family troubles had alienated him from his relations for many years that this expected sister was an exception—that he really loved her, and believed that she would soon gain the hearts of all his family.

Weeks glided by, and the winter came in like a lion.

Such piercing blasts of wind and such heavy falls of snow had rarely been known in the metropolis. When the Christmas time came it was heralded in by a violent snow-storm.

Little Bessie stood at the front window of the great Rudd mansion contemplating the storm and eagerly watching the people plodding their way through the snow.

The servants had told her that the people were out purchasing toys for the Christmas trees that night. So she was speculating upon the contents of every bundle that went by.

At last her mother notified her that was she expected to go out that evening to a Christmas tree at the house of her grandfather's sister, who had just arrived.

"Did she invite me, mamma?" inquired the child.

"No, dear; she doesn't know that there is such a little girl as you living. She invited your grandfather to come and bring his family to her Christmas tree. It is evident from her note that she doesn't know that I have a little daughter. But your grandfather says that you must go with us, or she will feel hurt when she learns that we left you behind."

"If she don't know me, mamma, she won't have anything on the tree for me."

"Oh, yes she will. The tree will be loaded with good things that are not marked with any names. You will have your hands full, you may be sure, before you come away."

Thus persuaded, the child gave her consent to be dressed for the expected entertainment. White and blue were the colours of the little dress they put on her. Her bare neck and shoulders and her plump little arms were very fair, and the rosy flush of health was in her cheeks. Then her brown curls were arranged, and her white slippers put upon her feet.

One more kiss from her fond mother, and away she whirled about the apartment like a fairy. Then she had to undergo the hard task of waiting patiently until her father and mother had completed their toilets. But the longest evening must have an end. Then came a terrible disappointment. A messenger arrived from Nicholas Rudd with a note which apprized them that he could not reach home for two hours yet, and that they must wait for him. Nothing could be done but to wait patiently and endeavour to keep little Bessie's mind occupied and interested in other matters than the expected Christmas tree. At last, when all was very weary and the hour was late, the banker drove up to the front of the house, and Bessie and her parents were hurried into the carriage, and away drove all four for the house of the strange lady.

The snow-storm drove downward with unabated fury, and the gale whirled the flakes into drifts on every side.

"We shall be very late, but my sister will be all the more gratified that we have come, and may insist upon our staying all night. Should she do so we had better accept the invitation."

After a long drive the aged banker said again: "It is evident my sister knows nothing of my grandchild. She has been in the East, and has probably gained her information of my family from newspaper accounts. She will be gratified, I know, by the surprise of meeting little Bessie."

The little girl again put in her suggestion that as she was unknown she would probably be unprovided for on the Christmas tree. Her apprehensions in this regard were quieted, and they hurried on over the snow faster than ever.

At last they reached the street in which the house stood.

Efforts had been made to clear the masses of snow from the steps and pavement. They had been partially successful, but the huge piles of snow obstructed the streets and gutters.

Nicholas Rudd looked out and saw that it was not feasible to drive just before the door.

So he directed the driver to pause at the first cut made through the snow-bank, and they would alight there and walk to the house.

The order was obeyed, and in a few seconds they stood upon the steps of the house.

The gale was appalling, and to their surprise and gratification they found the outer door open.

They immediately entered the vestibule, while Sam rang the bell.

His wife took off little Bessie's fur and hood, and Nicholas Rudd, finding that the inner door opened to his touch, pushed the child ahead, saying: "Go and see why they don't answer to the bell."

The child walked in and looked about her. Seeing no one she ventured to look in at a door whence a bright light was issuing.

At this instant the bell in the neighbouring church tower tolled the hour through the storm.

Nicholas Rudd and his party were amazed when they had counted the strokes.

Twelve o'clock!

The storm howled at the opening of Christmas, and the snow flew in blinding showers; but within the house was peace, for faith is peace.

Alone beside a Christmas tree, whence all others had fled, sat an aged woman with silvered head and gentle face, praying to Him in whom she trusted.

Hers was the faith which removes mountains, and she had brought to it new life and fervour from her visit to Bethlehem.

From the Holy Land she had returned to her home,

and once again before she died she had determined to wrestle in prayer for that which had been one of the sweetest hopes of her life.

The children of old neighbours and friends had come to the Christmas tree, taken their gifts, and gone.

Poor children, as of old, had come empty-handed and hungry and had gone away full.

The tree was still lighted, and only one gift remained upon it.

It was the little white stocking, a new white stocking, such as had marked the coming of each Christmas time for so many weary years. And upon it was written one little name, "Bessie," and it was stuffed full.

She could not eradicate from her memory the fact as it had been. Her lost darling was always a child to her, just as when for the last time she looked upon her blue eyes and brown curls and infantile loveliness.

As such she had dreamed of her and prayed for her restoration.

In the midst of her prayer of faith the clock told the hour to the storm.

She started at the heavy, solemn vibrations of the bell.

It was twelve o'clock.

Was the prayer of the righteous of no more avail? "I will trust in Heaven to my grave," she said, as the last stroke died away upon the blast.

She looked up, for she heard a footstep, a tiny little footfall upon the carpet.

She gazed upon the vision, the exquisite vision of her little Bessie come at last.

She had forgotten the flight of years and the changes of time. Her child had come as of old to claim the little white stocking on the tree.

Heaven had heard her prayer.

She trembled in the excess of her ecstasy, and with faltering limbs approached her Bessie and clasped her in her arms.

The skin of her little face was still soft and rose-flushed. Her lips were as dewy and sweet as in the precious days of the past, and the silver-haired mother lifted her in her arms that she might reach the little white stocking in the tree.

The little hands took down the prize, and Bessie kissed the aged woman tenderly till she wept for joy.

"My child! my child! Heaven has given me back my child!"

There was a loud and startling trampling in the hall as of feet shaking off the snow, and then a happy trio entered to do her reverence.

"Merry Christmas."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE brother and sister stood face to face once more after the lapse of many years. Time had marked his changes upon the brow of each. They were aged, but the family marks upon them were indelible and they recognized each other without difficulty.

She, still clinging to little Bessie, was presented to the son of Nicholas Rudd and to the young wife. She gazed long and earnestly at the latter, and then exclaimed:

"Why, she is wonderfully like my child!"

"Which child, sister?" said the aged banker.

"Why, this child," she said, holding little Bessie toward them.

The child was busily engaged in tearing open the wrappers of the toys with which the stocking was stuffed.

She exclaimed with delight when she saw some articles appear from the stocking which she had long coveted, and said:

"How did you know I was coming?"

"Sister," said the banker, "there is some misunderstanding here. This young woman is my son's wife and the child in your arms is her daughter Bessie. They are alike, it is true, and naturally enough, for they are mother and daughter."

"This child, my little daughter, the child of this lady who has married your son! Impossible! Brother, this is a child who was stolen from me and of whose existence you never heard."

"What!" exclaimed Nicholas Rudd. "Do you really mean that this young child is yours? Why, she is my grand-daughter. I have watched her little face developing into beauty from her earliest infancy. There has never been a week at a time of absence from her. She is as surely my grandchild as that Christmas tree stands there."

"Nicholas, she is my child. I lost her, and Heaven in answer to my prayers restored her to me. Nothing shall ever sever me from her."

The young mother now drew near in her surprise and anxiety. A rival claim was set up by this venerable lady. A suspicion crossed her mind that Mrs. Truelove might be insane.

"Tell me all about it, sister," said the old man. "There is evidently some mistake in your mind, some mystery. Tell me the whole occurrence. When did you lose your child, and what was her name?"

This question seemed to baffle the old lady. Dates and years began to assert themselves in her mind. Then the illusion of the moment faded. She dwelt so long upon the loveliness of that infantile face that she had never realized what changes must have occurred in the person of her lost darling.

"Why," she exclaimed, "I must have been dreaming all these years. Oh, how many years ago was it? It was something like eighteen years ago that she was stolen from me or strayed away. Ah, I can tell. Come to this drawer."

She led the way to a great drawer in a piece of ancient looking furniture, or sideboard, which she retained when her other goods were sold. She opened it and exposed rows of little white stockings stuffed full of presents for a little girl.

"There, you see I was right. Count the stockings and add to them the one that Bessie has in her hand and you will see that my child has been gone from me eighteen years. Every Christmas Eve I have hung a stocking upon the tree for her, and prayed Heaven to send her back to me to claim them all."

There were the evidences of her faith and her fidelity to the memory of her child. She gave them all to Bessie and the child was wild with delight. So many little stockings, stuffed full, had never fallen to the lot of one little girl on Christmas Day before. They were all hers, and upon each one of them was a scrap of paper bearing the single word "Bessie."

Tears stood in the eyes of the old man as he contemplated her.

"Tell me more, sister," he said, putting his hand upon the arm of Sam's wife and restraining her as she was about to speak. "Did you ever hear from the child again?"

"Yes, yes," she said. "One of the greatest detectives ever known tracked her. His name was Pryor, and he was found murdered in the docks."

"Murdered!" exclaimed Nicholas Rudd. "I knew him, but never heard of his fate."

"I saw his mysterious death mentioned in a newspaper," she said. "But no matter about that now. He traced my child. He came to my husband and obtained a party of men to aid him in retaking Bessie, but when we all came to the place the child was gone and the woman who had possession of her lay there alone and murdered."

"What was the woman's name?" said Sam's wife, approaching Mrs. Truelove, eager curiosity beaming in her face.

"Red Eyed Mag," was the reply, as she fixed her attention upon the beautiful face of the young wife.

"I was that little child, Bessie, and you are my mother, and this is your grandchild!" exclaimed the young wife.

"I am bewildered," said "the good woman," regarding her. "Are you my child, my long-lost Bessie? What proofs do you bring?"

"Upon my neck when I was stolen or lost hung a little golden harp suspended from a golden chain. Here it is, mother, upon my neck now. Do you not recognize it?"

The silver-haired woman took the little harp in her fingers and looked eagerly upon it. Then she gazed at the features of its wearer.

"Yes, yes; that is the same harp and chain, and your face is the face of little Bessie here. My daughter! my daughter!"

Mrs. Rudd folded her arms about her mother and her child, when a voice rang out behind them:

"I wish yees all a merry Christmas, and Mrs. Truelove a thousand. What in the name of wonder does all this mane? Shure and if I didn't kape a watch upon this house meself the thaves would run away with ivery blessed loose article yees had lyin' about. I tuk it into me head to look at yer house and see if ye had returned from Egypt, and shure the first thing me eyes lighted on was a thief watching, the outside door wide open. Then I made so bowld as to step in and warn yees to kape the door shut. And that's the way I caught yees all on the merry Christmas."

A sergeant of police in full uniform stood at the parlour door, and with his cap and shoulders covered with snow.

"Dennis O'Toole!" exclaimed Mrs. Truelove. "I am happy to see you. This is my child, Bessie, who was stolen, and this is her little daughter Bessie. They have just come back to me. I told you once that prayer would work wonders."

"Shure an' it has, Heaven be praised!" he said, removing his cap and coming in to look more closely at the lost one.

"Upon me sowl! you're right too! There's two Bessies now, and they all look alike. Poor Pryor, poor man! What an honest chap he was. And he never forget little Bessie and 'is dyin' breath."

"What do you mean, Dennis?" said Mrs. Truelove.

"What do you know of Pryor?"

"I knew he was a detective Mr. Truelove had employed. He lost the track and it depressed his spirits. But he struck it agin somehow, and afore he could acquaint yees with the trooth a bullet cut his breath short. But he died game."

"What do you mean?" said they all.

"I mane that he wrote wid his dyin' hands this message to prove the good stuff of which he was made. It fell into the hands of my son. He, like an ould noodle, put it in the pocket of his vist and forgot the same. It's been concealed in an ould chist this mony a day. Here it is. Me girls was overhauling the ould traps and they spied it. If any of yees knowed his handwriting it will spake for itself."

Sergeant Dennis O'Toole produced a fragment of paper from his pocket-book and handed it to Mrs. Truelove.

She recognized the handwriting of the faithful detective who had so often written to her husband on the subject of the lost child.

Then she read it aloud:

"Mr. Truelove. Your lost child, Bessie, is the daughter-in-law of the great Nicholas Rudd. She has the harp and chain. I am dying. Your faithful
"PRYOR."

When morning came the earth was covered with deep snow. The storm had lulled itself away, and the sun burst forth brilliantly on Christmas morning. What a happy Christmas time it was for all in that house! They slept late, but when they gathered about the breakfast table—the four who had surprised Mrs. Truelove at midnight, they felt that life was beautiful and Heaven had blessed them. The daughter had found a mother, the mother a child, and the brother a sister.

Mrs. Truelove would not allow them to leave after midnight for the house of Nicholas Rudd, so the carriage was sent away, and they slept beneath one roof.

In the morning Mrs. Rudd had stolen away from her sleeping husband, and joined her mother in her bed-chamber. The old lady had insisted upon little Bessie sleeping with her, and when the young mother entered the room, she found the child seated in the bed and engaged in opening some of the little stockings which had been accumulating so many years for her mother. Mrs. Truelove was lying beside the child, listening to her comments upon the contents of the stockings.

Bessie, the young mother, lay down between the grandchild and grandmother, and, folding her arms about Mrs. Truelove, said:

"I have yearned nearly all my life for a mother's caress and tenderness. Give them to me now. The hairs of my mother are gray, and her step not so buoyant as when I knew her, but my heart will cling tighter to her now that her society has come to me in womanhood."

Then, in that hallowed hour, she revealed to her mother the history of her eventful life, from the day of her earliest recollection to the time the letter had come from the Holy Land. Mrs. Truelove was made acquainted with all the history of Sam, too, and of the terrible ordeal he had passed through in the crowded court. She shivered at the incidents of the horsewhipping, and the sufferings of the three children in winter under the wharf. She wondered at the strange destiny which had eventually given Bessie a home and an education with the Thorne family.

Then came the narrative of the marriage and the marvel of the mysterious trance. After all came the revelation that Nicholas Rudd had married in Italy and was the true and genuine father of Sam.

When Bessie had concluded Mrs. Truelove said:

"Heaven has been answering my prayers one after another. I prayed that if our separation must be long that you would be thrown among those who knew the value of education. This prayer was answered. I prayed that you might avoid vice. Here too was I heard. I begged Heaven to bring to your vision and appreciation the truths of religion. And Mrs. Thorne brought you up as a Christian. Every supplication has been heard, and the answer given in Heaven's own time and way. Your poor father gave up all hope in his last years. But I never doubted the promises of Heaven; I never will."

"Now that peace has come to me in my declining years I yearn for a home in the house where I was born. That homestead, always dear to me, was sold and passed into the possession of strangers when my father died. But I have often dreamed of the dear old place where my girlhood was passed, and I longed for the day when I might rove its woodlands and pastures again."

"Bessie, that time has come at last. The instant I realized, by reading my husband's will, the great property he had left to me I resolved to make an effort to buy that old homestead. I have been successful.

My agent has purchased it for me, and when the deed is made out it shall be made in the names of Bessie Truelove and her child, Bessie Rudd. You will have the entire ownership of it when I am no more; but while I live it shall be a peaceful home for us all. My brother shall pass the summer months among the woods and hills of his boyhood, and see the streams and the aged willows which once he loved. Little Bessie shall there drink in fresh air and life from the meadows.

"Do you know what I have named the old homestead and the valley where I was born? I will tell you. It was ever a place of peace and gentle joy to me. I was allowed full range of the woods and the valley. I knew all the trees and the trout streams and the varieties of birds. They suffered me to grow up as nature's child. Hence, by the cool springs, under the great trees, and beside the shrubbery which lined the streams, I learned to see Heaven."

"Then as the words of Holy Scripture were explained to me I grasped at the truths they revealed as the noblest and most sublime that could engage the attention of the human heart. I learned that true life was to serve Him who created me, and that to serve Him well I must minister unto His children. I have found the purest joy of my life among His suffering poor, and when I am gone, Bessie, use the property I shall leave you in relieving pain and poverty. You must do this for my sake."

"Now I will tell you what I have named the old homestead where I hope to lie down at my death. I have called it 'The Vale of Rest.' Do you also retain that name for it during your life. It was rest and peace for me in girlhood. Then came the storms of life away from it. Now again am I going back to it to enjoy rest and peace again. Bessie, my daughter, I shall take you to my girlhood's home, 'The Vale of Rest,' before I die."

CHAPTER XXXV.

REMOTE from the hideous shriek of the railroad engine, and distant also from the common highway, in a seclusion suitable for a poet and a dreamer, is a small valley. It is reached only by a private road, belonging to and kept in order by some dozen farmers of the neighbourhood. The little valley and the low hills which shut it in are all one property. It is a private farm. Grass grows here with peculiar richness and verdure, and a stream wanders through the meadows. The hills are crowned with woods, and from one of them a slender rivulet leaps in successive cascades down to the greater stream below. When the sunlight falls full upon this rivulet the cascades seem to flutter like the transparent wings of fairies.

On the opposite hillside, under the elms, whose branches droop low, is a group of broken and irregular rocks, covered with moss and shrubs of the wildest character. From under these rocks a cool spring gushes out, fills a rock basin lower down, and then the slender thread of water wanders through a double row of weeping willows, which border the meadows. This spring and threadlike brook and these willows are famous for the many birds which haunt them in the summer time. The little songsters are very merry in this locality, for no one molests them. No one on this secluded farm would harm a songster of any kind, for the music of birds, and the whispering of leaves, and the laughter of brooks are dearer to the inmates of the farmhouse in the valley than any instrumental harmonies that men have invented.

But the old, old farmhouse, covered with vines, is the great attraction of the estate. It was the retreat of sweet peace and harmony. The birds nestled and sang in the vines which clambered over the antique porch. High in the ancient trees which shaded the lawn, they met to chant their love to each other or to look archly down upon the family, who sometimes flung crumbs upon the grass for them. There was an ancient barn a few rods off in the meadow grass, and under its eaves the swallows darted in and out and then, skimming along the grass, sought the stream, that they might ripple its mirror with their fleet wings ere they mounted skyward. In this placid stream one of a group of elms had fallen headlong. It was a great monarch of its kind. But, whatever it might have witnessed in days of yore, it could see no longer, for its head was buried under water and its naked branches were the well-known resort of trout. The group of trees from which it had fallen away were mighty trees in bulk and tenacity, and under their abundant shade many a peasant had eaten his lunch and taken a nap in the heats of summer.

Behind the old house was a path worn in the meadow grass, which curled and twisted its way till it brought a stranger to the cool spring, full of white pebbles, under the bushes. The sunlight was always foiled in its efforts to smile upon the spring. The jealous bushes would not permit this familiarity to

ward the pure ward they had been guardians of so many years. Beyond the spring was a marsh, full of wild lilies, and here the dainty snipe loved to flit about, because no hunter dared invade their retreat. Nature was the sovereign whom all the people of this secluded valley recognized. From the old house under the trees no other house could be seen. The eye roved over meadows, waters, hills and woods. Cattle grazed in the luxuriant pastures, and above the serene valley was the blue vault of heaven with its fleecy clouds. There were rustic seats under the trees which shaded the lawn, and from these seats on a Sunday morning could be heard, ever so faintly, a far-off church bell calling the worshippers to a little country church.

But there was one mysterious path which led away from the mansion and seemed to lose itself in the dark woods which lined the eastern side of the valley. Following up this path the stranger would encounter a fish-pond at the edge of the woods and under the hill which they crowned. The shadows of the wood were sometimes upon this pool of pure water, and the setting sun always gave it a parting smile. It was alive with fish, and it had a history with which the readers of this story are already acquainted. Then the path led on up the hill and under the trees. Squirrels chattered here, the irregular formations of the ground were rich in wild flowers, and clusters of hazel-nuts hung to the trees. Then visions of red wild honeysuckles and clematis covering the ground under the trees like a carpet. Farther on the path passed amid beds of myrtle of rich dark green. Then came in sight a grove of pines and oaks where the dead of many generations slumbered. Ancient tombstones were there, dark and overgrown with moss. White headstones of the moderns were there too. The moderns must die, and in time their headstones will be dark and gray.

It was a quiet home, that valley which Bessie Truelove had named "The Vale of Rest." Man, weary of the turmoil of cities and the utility of steam and noise, could find sweet solace and opportunity for meditation under the elms of the valley. Here could the body recruit its strength in the pure air, and with the pure country food. Here could the soul, too, meditate. It was truly a vale of rest. But if ever human passions should steal into the old homestead in the valley, and assert themselves painfully, there was a retreat more quiet and peaceful still where it was sometimes well to wonder and to meditate. The way led by the old fish-pond under the hill, and then up to it and over the hill, through the woods to the little wooded valley where the dead slumbered. This was more emphatically "The Vale of Rest." Here could the brokenhearted, for whom country air and country pleasures were unavailing, lay themselves down and find that rest which the world could never give. From time immemorial this whole estate had been called St. Simon.

One of those lovely October mornings when the sky is blue and the air mellow, and the night frost has dissolved in the increasing warmth of the sun, two pedestrians left the old homestead and took the path leading past the fish-pond.

They walked so deliberately and slowly, leaning on each other, that one might have fancied them to be lovers.

But no, their years and their sorrows had been too many to admit of that exquisite passion which is Heaven when it is mutual. The fresh transport of love was long ago over for them. It was now only a beautiful reminiscence of early life.

They were aged now, and those whom they had worshipped as lovers in the past were gone to the spirit land.

True, they looked forward to a reunion with the loved and the lost in a few years. But now they were only enjoying the sweetness of an intercourse which is the purest on earth when it is genuine and true.

They were brother and sister, and both their heads were frosted by age.

As they crossed the bridge over the stream she pointed to the fish plainly visible, and recalled to her companion the days of childhood when together they had turned over the stones in the meadow for worms to fling to the hungry fish.

Then they paused by great plum trees and spoke of the days when their little hands had planted them. The trees were more vigorous and upright in form than the aged couple. And so the brother remarked to her as they passed on.

Then the richness of the coloured mantles on the trees attracted them as they approached the hill. The autumn king is a master in colouring. His colours are brilliant, though his hand is cold.

At last the path brought them to the fish-pond.

The shadows of the wood were still resting upon its placid surface, and some of the scarlet and yellow leaves of the trees had fallen upon it, and were lying there motionless like the anchored fleet of a fairy queen.

But the aged brother started at sight of it, and turned with an impatient gesture from it.

"Come on," he said, hoarsely. "I can't forget that pool and the associations it recalls. It fills me with hateful feelings even in my old age. Cursed be the day that I ever saw it, for it has lost me home and kindred, and made me almost an Ishmael."

Too well the sister remembered it too. It had been the cause of an estrangement bitter as gall and enduring as life.

She knew that there her brother had been cruelly wronged when his heart was young and took upon its sensitive surface this bias of a lifetime.

Here had the proud, wayward boy, Nicholas Rudd, committed the error of cleaning out all the fish in his father's pond with a net. He had been painfully punished for the offence. He cared not a groat for this punishment. But he refused to expose his comrade in the exploit—his brother. This is a point of honour with some boys. They will confess their own offence and shield their comrades.

Enraged at his son's obstinate adherence to this boyish point of honour, the father attempted to beat it out of him.

He encountered now a youthful Spartan in the boy, Nicholas, who declared that he would die before he would betray others. He was cruelly beaten for this obstinate adherence to a principle, but blows were ineffectual.

Then he was turned out in the storm to fight the battle of life for himself.

He would never speak to his father again, and never sought to put eyes upon him when success had made him a power among men.

The cruelty of the stern father had embittered his whole life.

The father was under the sod now, but the resentment lived still with the boy grown gray. He dwelt upon the matter as his aged sister led him away from the pool. She was silent and listened with aching heart, for she knew that men who cherish resentment are displeasing to Heaven.

Up the hillside into the woods of autumn toiled the aged brother and sister, and she sought to divert his thoughts to the wonderful hues of October. He grew at length calm again under the sweet influence of that woman's voice and ideas.

Bessie Truelove always charmed and disarmed those with whom she walked. The purity of her heart and her gentle kindness won all to her side. The pure and the beautiful was her element, and she loved nature in all its loveliness, and she detected beauty with a poet's insight. And thus, long before the end of the ancient path was reached, her brother was peaceful and happy again. Finally the old man looked on before him and saw the cemetery. Back over the great wastes of time flew his heart and his memory again.

"Oh, Bessie," he said, "they are all lying here under the earth as when I was last here. Ay, and I see by the many mounds that others are now keeping them company. Ah! whose name is this upon the stone next to mother's grave? This is Mary, my little sister, who grew to be a mother, and then died when I was an exile from home. And here is my brother who was called the gem of the family, and who failed at last to win in the life-battle. Here, too, is Henry, who was trumpeted to the world as being far superior to me. He was a kind-hearted fellow, but he never could have understood the treachery of men. And here is the brother for whose sake I was beaten and turned out into the storm. And this is his wife and child beside him. Ah! Sister Bessie, how sweet is death after all."

"Yes, brother," she said, still clinging to his arm as he read the names upon the stones; "death is sweet for those who are ready to die. Love your enemies and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you. Can you stand here amid these wrecks of our family and cherish aught but forgiveness? Ah! death is so near to both of us. Before your sister Bessie goes too under these sods promise her in the name of Heaven that you will visit this next grave here at our right with forgiveness on your lips and heart."

She pointed to a mound as she concluded, and he stood for a moment before it in silence.

"Nicholas," she said, "father was very feeble before he died. It would have melted your heart to hear him speak of you in his decline. He knew of your great success and regretted that you would never open the letters he sent you. He gave up all hope of reconciliation at last, and died in my arms. But he said, with almost his last breath: 'Tell that proud boy that I know I was wrong. If ever you meet him again, tell him that his dying father asked for forgiveness at the very verge of the grave.'"

The stony heart, made stone by cruelty, softened now. He could not resist the appeal. He fell upon his knees beside the grave of the old man. This son so old now himself.

"Father," he said, "if the dead hear us, hear my words of pardon. I accept the words sent me from your deathbed. I forgive you utterly as I hope for pardon myself."

The sweet face of the aged Bessie was sunshine now. When her brother arose she kissed him on the cheek, and said:

"Now all is safe. Our family shall all meet again in harmony in the better land. The last thorn is plucked now from your life. Oh! of all the acts by which a human soul can please Heaven the most acceptable from a proud heart is forgiveness."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

OVER the river is an ancient covered bridge. The original timbers are in it still. But little alteration has been made in the venerable structure since its erection. It is an historical relic, and many legends have been handed down from generation to generation regarding it. Blended in with the historical fictions concerning it are items of truth. The safest authority to refer to in the matter was an old man, the well-known dignitary who sat at one end of the bridge in his little room and came out at every rumbling sound on the planks to collect the toll. So he was regarded by the country people as an oracle. His memory was wonderful, and all who stopped to chat with the old man gained from him some new facts regarding their own ancestors, provided they had been of the county.

"Old Stuff," for by this title was he known to the surrounding country, was very accurate in his statements. If there was no mistake about an historical occurrence in the neighbourhood, the old toll collector would not bear contradiction. But some events he had not gained knowledge of from his ancestors. Then he was ready to listen to new or additional evidence.

But he was a venerable old chatterbox, and every neighbour who passed the bridge had a kind word for Old Stuff. Out of his little house or box would he trot, with his queer little cocked hat over his long gray hair and with his long stockings of wool meeting his short breeches at the knee. He wore knee-buckles of silver, which his father had worn before him. He wore over his gray shirt an old-fashioned brown coat with great pockets. He was a queer old picture standing at the end of the bridge peering down through the shadows for a new-comer, or else seated at the door of his box knitting woollen socks or stockings, for which accomplishment he was famous, and whereby he picked up a good deal. The boys of the neighbourhood were very fond of having a chat with the old fellow. If they wanted history of battles and of midnight rides in the hours of danger Old Stuff was their man. If they wanted fish the old man knew every good trout hole in the county.

To the boys he was a sort of hero. To the adult population he was a good and respectable old relic. The country girls, too, always had some sly fun poked at them by the toll-gatherer as the country waggons paused at his door.

But of all the people, old or young, who had ever passed over that bridge no one had built so abiding a nest in the old man's heart as a little girl. He called her his little girl when she had crossed the bridge, with the tiny feet of childhood, on her way to the country schoolhouse. He carried in his heart always a vivid picture of her blue eyes, rosy cheeks and brown curls and her elastic step as she walked past, with her luncheon-basket on her arm and her schoolmates about her. Sometimes she had crossed the bridge alone, and had stopped to talk with him or had delivered a message from her mother, who asserted that the stockings knitted at the covered bridge were the best in the country.

To the merry little girl Old Stuff was an ever new subject of curiosity and delight. To the old man the talkative child, with her old-fashioned ways, was a little queen. She used to laugh at his queer costume and his cocked hat so merrily that he would laugh too.

There was not a particle of vanity in the toll-collector. He loved to make fun of everybody that passed, and he expected fun in return.

One day this little girl demonstrated to him that she was making progress in drawing by bringing to him a picture of herself she had sketched at school. There he was, on a half-sheet of paper, cocked hat, knee-breeches and all.

Underneath it she had written: "My dear old Stuff."

She poked it slyly into his hand, and then ran laughing with some girls across the bridge. On the following day, as she passed on her way to school, she saw that the old man had nailed the likeness of himself to the wall of his room. He told her he should keep it there till his old hands were too cold to hold toll money any longer.

A few weeks after this occurrence he presented her with a new pair of white woollen stockings he had

knitted for her, with her name marked in blue cotton upon each of them. And so the flirtation went on between the adult and the child, until they became not lovers but bosom friends. This friendship lasted through life.

One day, as the years flow by, a lovely maiden crossed over the bridge and paused before him. Her curls were flowing down her back, and her straw hat was decked with wild flowers.

"How wonderful pretty you are!" he said.

"What an old flatterer you are!" she replied.

"What makes you come here, then, so often if you don't like to be flattered?" he said, slyly.

"Humph! what do you think I care for your flattery?"

And so they made fun and coquetted as the years went by.

Finally she came one day across the bridge with a serious face.

"Stuff!" she said, taking a seat beside him in his little room, "something has happened to me."

"I don't wonder," he said. "You're getting so pretty and so saucy that old Jinglefoot has doubtless come, as I always said he would, to carry you off."

"No; somebody else has come to carry me off," she said.

"Now I am alarmed," he said. "Let me see—let me see. I suspected as much. Over the bridge and over the bridge rides every other day my fine young lawyer. Away he rides toward the old homestead. I might have known it, old idiot that I am! Have I hit right?"

She blushed deeply, and said:

"Don't laugh at me, Stuff!"

"No, I won't laugh," he said. "This is too serious a business, this getting married!"

And then he roared until the vault of the old bridge rang again.

"You don't feel a bit sorry because I'm going away, Stuff?"

"Oh, yes, I do. But if I don't laugh I'll have to cry. Of all the people that cross the bridge there never will be one to take your place, my little Bessie—not one."

He said this half-choking with anguish. She had been the light of his life.

She had come to him when he was alone and on a sick bed, bringing him every delicacy that her hands could make. She made her father send off every day, until he recovered, a horse and chaise to bring the doctor to him.

He had never seriously contemplated that his little girl would grow up and leave the neighbourhood for ever.

But now the terrible news had come. Bessie was going to be married and cross the bridge on her departure.

What gloom seemed to overspread the sky and the river! How lonely would the old bridge be now when that sweet smile was gone from it!

She spoke very low and gently in response, and, as she did so, was engaged in removing the wrapper of something she had brought for him at parting.

"There will be One that will cross this bridge when I am gone, Stuff, who is my friend. And I want you to be as kind to Him as you have always been to me. He will take my place and cheer your heart as I never can do. He will come noiselessly and cross so gently that you will not hear His footstep on the bridge. He will come especially when the night is still and the moon and stars are shining there in the river. When the old bridge is silent at night, watch for Him and love Him for my sake. Here is the book which will tell you all about Him and how and when He comes."

She placed in the hands of the old man a handsome copy of the Bible. He saw that she had written in it her own name, Bessie.

"Will you read it, and think of my friend when I am gone?"

"Yes, Bessie," he said, earnestly. "A book which makes you so kind to the poor and suffering must be a good book to read. I will study it for your sake. No one on earth but you could make me read it."

He pressed her hand warmly and she was gone. When half way across the bridge she turned and kissed her hand to him. Then he lost sight of her graceful figure and it passed on into the fields beyond the river.

Year after year, with its burden of care or its resting-place of momentary joy, passed away. The child became the adult, the adult became the grandparent. The trunks of the trees grew fuller and their branches spread wider, and the people who had chatted beneath their foliage were borne one by one to their graves. Old Stuff seemed to survive everything and everybody. The country people had died by hundreds, but the old man still sat in his quaint dress in the toll-house at the end of the bridge. He

was very old and very feeble, and a relative now attended to his duties at the bridge. But the old white-haired man loved to linger out his last days on this spot, and the old farmers loved to see him sitting in his old place still. He was often seen now sitting with his Bible in his lap. He could read, though every other faculty but sight was impaired. One day a man drove up to the toll-gate and said to him:

"Your old friend is gone at last. She died to-day."

The aged man's lips trembled for a moment and his eyes filled with tears. Then, controlling himself, he asked for an account of the last scene. It was given him in all its touching beauty. The "good woman" had left the vale of rest of her childhood and of her last years with the name of her celestial friend upon her lips, and with a smile which Death seemed reluctant to freeze. And this was the dying message she had sent to her Christian convert, Old Stuff, at the bridge:

"Tell him that since he has found out when and how my great friend passes the bridge, to look out for his little Bessie, for she expects to pass with Him often over that same bridge as a ministering angel to those who shall be heirs of salvation."

And still the years go on and the old man sits there in the toll-house waiting for his final summons. The imagery of the Good Book has waiked up poetry in the aged soul. He sees or fancies he sees strange visions in the still hours of the night when no hoofs or wheels sound upon the floor of the bridge, and he looks upon the waters of the river silvered by the moonlight. He says there are times when a mist steals up over the land and settles upon the river, and when he has gazed long upon this mist, silvered by the high moon, it takes the form of an ethereal bridge, spanning the stream just beside the old bridge. He has watched so many years.

Gently surging, the spirit bridge reaches to the opposite shore, and over it as he gazes wonderful forms of men and women and children in heavenly robes pass and are seen no more, while angels, winged, pass and re-pass the bridge leading to the heavenly side the ransomed from sin, and every mortal face as it passes over is upward turned, receiving full upon it a heavenly, mellow light from gates which open in the clouds.

When he has watched and viewed the mysterious pageant long a well-remembered face appears upon the bridge amid the ethereal and glorious forms, and, with that smile intensified with which she led on souls to Heaven, now glides across on supernatural errands.

Sometimes she leads by the hand a timid girl, upon whom the world has stamped a shameful brand, and as she leads she points to the silvery light issuing from the open gates. Again she reappears on the world side of the bridge, conducting across a man who has shaken off a mantle of vice and behind whom walk his entire family, all saved through her. A great line of redeemed travellers are always passing under her guidance, and every time she returns for more her face is visible, and it is the radiant face of an angel. Once he saw her pass with two little children, one on either arm, and once he saw an old man with her, going over, who was like himself, very old and very feeble, and dressed in the costume of the olden time. So he knows that his own exit from time cannot be far off.

He loves to tell of the heavenly bridge and its glorious company, and he says that when it dissolves and falls away in mist another bridge just like it arises from the river and spans the stream and is illumined again from the open gates in the sky with the same celestial and silvery light.

The old man's story has travelled far and wide among the people who knew the lovely woman on the earth, and to this day they speak of the supernatural vision as "Bessie's Bridge."

THE END.

The city of Baltimore suffered heavily on July 25, from a fire which broke out in a saw-mill. A strong wind drove the flames before it, and about 100 buildings, including four churches, were destroyed. Several lives were lost, and the property destroyed is valued at about 120,000.

LADY BURDETT COULTS has been presented by 2,000 of the working people of the East of London with an oil-painting, as a memorial of their good feeling and esteem. There was quite a fête at Holly Lodge, Highgate, on the 20th ult., the Archbishop of Canterbury and Mrs. Tait being amongst the company.

PERILS OF SURGEONS WHILE OPERATING.—Dr. Marc Girard, an eminent surgeon, has lately died from a prick of a pin. He was operating upon the shoulder of a patient for a wound in which mortification had set in, and in placing the last sutures he

accidentally scratched his finger. The effect appeared trivial, and the hurt soon apparently healed, but shortly after again inflamed, the poison extending through the body, and a lingering death was the result. M. Doctat states positively that there is no necessity for any ill effects as above being caused by inoculation of the blood of either a diseased patient or a corpse when so simple and sure an agent as carbolic acid will promptly and almost infallibly arrest them.

YORK HOUSE, TWICKENHAM.

In addition to the other historic houses condemned to pass under the auctioneer's hammer is York House, Twickenham, lately the residence of the Comte de Paris, and fifty years ago the home of the well-known sculptress, the Hon. Mrs. Damer. From Cobbett's "Memorials of Twickenham" it appears that the house was originally given by the Crown to Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, on the public announcement of his daughter's marriage with James II., then Duke of York, after whom it was named. Ironside infers from the name of the house, and from the fact that his two daughters, Mary and Ann, were successively housed in it, that the Duke of York originally resided here, and that he gave it up to his father-in-law on account of its proximity to Hampton Court and to the Duke of Lauderdale's mansion at Ham. However, be this as it may, Clarendon resided here during the zenith of his popularity, at all events during the summer months; and he himself tells us that when he attended the King at Hampton Court, he came home every night to his house at Twickenham. It was his "literary villa," and Mr. Cobbett thinks that probably here he received the visits of Ben Jonson, Isaac Walton, Edmund Waller, Sir Kenelm Digby, Chillingworth, and other distinguished men of letters.

During the Great Fire of London the furniture of Dunkirk House was removed hither. It is certainly the tradition that Queen Anne was born here, and one large apartment on the first floor on the north side has ever since been called "Queen Anne's room." Lysons tells us that the house subsequently became the property of the Chancellor's second son, Lawrence Hyde, Earl of Rochester. Having passed through some intermediate hands, it came into those of the Prince de Saxe-Coburg, Minister Plenipotentiary from Vienna, who made it a scene of gaiety and fitted up in it a theatre for amateur performances. It was advertised as the residence and property of the Prince in the "Times," July 3rd, 1817. The purchaser on this occasion was Mrs. Damer, who had succeeded by Horace Walpole's bequest to Strawberry Hill, but who had recently given up that house to the Waldegraves. She added to the east end of the mansion a room which she used as a studio for her sculpture, but which now is converted into a conservatory; and here she frequently entertained Queen Caroline as a guest. She left the house to her niece, Lady Johnstone; and it was from the Misses Johnstone that it was purchased a few years ago by His Royal Highness the Duc d'Angoulême for his nephew, the Comte de Paris, who vacated it in 1871 on his return to France. Since then it has been unoccupied.

The grounds, which adjoin the parish church of Twickenham, embrace an area of about seven acres of lawn and garden, and "Eel Pie Island" in the Thames forms part of the estate. The house itself is a large red brick structure, with a high-pitched roof, rather after the style of Kensington Palace, and has probably been extensively altered since the reign of Charles II.

THE MARQUIS OF LORNE is, it is stated, in treaty for the purchase of the splendid residence near Sea View known as the Sea Grove, Isle of Wight, at present the property of W. H. Glynn, Esq.

ALLOWANCE FOR A HOT MEAL.—An extra allowance of threepence-halfpenny may be charged until further instructions for such soldiers as are billeted on licensed victuallers and innkeepers, in addition to the twopenny for a hot meal prescribed for soldiers in billets by Section 66 of the Mutiny Act of 1873.—War Office, July 17.

THE whole of the marblework of the Wellington monument is completed and fixed in St. Paul's Cathedral, and nearly all the bronze work appertaining to the marble has been cast and fitted, but some portions of this bronze work have been taken back to Mr. Stevens's studio for the purpose of being finished off by him.

SALES OF LAND ON THE INCREASE.—A return of landed estates, etc., registered at the Estate Exchange, Tokenhouse Yard, London, E.C., as sold by public auction and private contract, from the 1st of January to the 30th of June, together with the amount sold for the same period in 1871 and 1872:—Total amount of sales registered from the 1th of January to the 30th of June, 1871, 1,903,180*l.*; 1872, 3,775,080*l.*; 1873, 4,784,857*l.*



[KARL'S CONFESSION.]

THE ROBBER OF COBLENTZ PASS.

THE valley of the Rhine has for centuries been celebrated both in song and story as the locale of feudal lords and bandit chiefs.

The story of Karl Blasius, of Schinderhannes, of Muri and other noted robbers of this region are as well known as history and romance can transmit any fact of the past. It was not until very lately even, that the traveller, unless under strong escort, could really feel safe in crossing the mountain passes and threading the forest roads that cross the valley of the upper Rhine.

The old castle of Onsfeldt, near the pretty little town of Lussan, is now but a gloomy ruin inhabited by bats and owls, who sleep during the day, and revel among its moss-grown walls and damp arches at night.

The legends of the ruins of Onsfeldt would fill a volume, and its authentic history, a portion of which we propose to tell you, is romantic enough for a legend. It would be difficult to say at what date it was erected, but it was one of those strongholds of the fifteenth century that feudalism has given rise to, and had been the residence by turns of princes, lords and knights, until the power of its possessors had faded away.

Of the last lord of Onsfeldt we have to speak, a proud and stern man, who possessed all the nerve, manliness, and aristocratic sentiments of his race; but whose fortune, like his castle walls, was gradually crumbling to decay, and who, though too proud to own it, was far too poor to sustain such a mode of living as he indulged in.

For himself he cared not, but having married a fair young creature of high birth and accomplishments, and having by her a daughter no less fair and lovely, he felt more for them than for himself.

He struggled hard, and strove by gradually parting with his wide domains to procure them the comforts and necessities they required. But Heaven saw fit to take his wife from him, and left the gentle, sweet-dispositioned little Arville, his only solace and comfort.

The event seemed to make a decided change in the character of the Lord of Onsfeldt. It seemed at first greatly to embitter his heart toward the world, and to increase his love for the darling treasure that was left to him.

Devoting his every power of mind and his scanty means toward teaching Arville himself, as well as procuring the best of masters for her, he seemed gloomy and unhappy only when absent from her side.

One by one the servants and retainers had been dismissed, until the domestic arrangements of the castle were accomplished by an old butler and his wife, a female attendant upon Arville, her old nurse, and a boy servant of his lordship's, with a half-dozen grooms and stable-boys. This, when it is remembered that Onsfeldt Castle had numbered nearly two hundred immediate retainers, was a very small number.

Still Lord Onsfeldt grew gloomier and darker and more secluded day by day, and even Arville, now ripening into maidenhood, almost trembled at times as she gazed upon his stern brow and muttering lips.

But suddenly there was a change in the fortunes of the family, a change that no one could account for, and the coffers seemed to have been replenished by some magic power.

New retainers were added to the limited household heretofore supported. Horses, fresh, and of the purest breed, now filled the stalls. Arville's own beautiful Andalusian pony was graced with an entirely new saddle and bridle of the most costly workmanship, and the Lord of Onsfeldt went often to Aix-la-Chapelle and brought home jewellery and precious stones to deck the person of his fair child.

From Onsfeldt to Dusseldorf the fame of her beauty was known, and her father seemed to have no other pride, no other love, save that shined in his daughter. They rode together, walked together, and were more like brother and sister than like a proud lord and his only child.

"Father," said Arville one day, as he placed upon her finger a jewelled ring of rare brilliancy and value, "father, your fortune must be princely to admit these costly presents to me."

"Should it not be princely, my child?" he answered. "Know you not that we are descended from kings, and that for miles along this valley, and on both sides of the Rhine, thy fathers and mine have ruled for centuries?"

"True, but—"

"What, Arville?"

"I have sometimes thought that you seemed to have partly expended the wealth of your family estates."

"In some measure, I have."

"But lately, dear father, you have been so lavish in your outlays for me that I thought you must have replenished your coffers."

"And so I have, Arville; but business does not become thy sex, so we will talk no more of it."

"How glorious the light of these diamonds," continued the girl, thoughtfully, as she gazed upon the

rosy colours emitted by her father's last gift of a ring of brilliancy.

"Fit objects for thine eyes to gaze upon," said the father, proudly.

"You will spoil me, father."

"Never, Arville; thou art so much like thy sainted mother that I sometimes start in amazement as I gaze upon thy features."

Arville's tutors were numerous, and scarcely a branch of literature or a ladylike accomplishment was forgotten.

Music she loved beyond all other pursuits, and yet it had been extremely difficult to procure her a master for the guitar, until at the time of which we write.

While Arville was but sixteen, a young German student from beyond the mountains, who had slung his guitar over his shoulder and started on a vacation tramp through the valley, chanced to meet with the Lord of Onsfeldt, and, after some trifling preliminaries, he was engaged for a brief period as a tutor for Arville, and in this capacity he was duly installed at the castle.

The father, however, soon found that the music-teacher whom he had secured for his daughter was a young man of marked character, humble to be sure, but possessed of a remarkably well-cultivated mind, and very refined tastes.

He was an amateur at his instrument, but his purse being but light he was very glad to do any honourable service to aid himself in means, and so he told his lordship.

Karl Gotzen was introduced to his pupil at once. He was not more than four years her senior, and he was at once so dazzled by her extraordinary beauty and intelligence that he felt he must be very guarded in his intercourse, else he should lose his heart most irretrievably to one whose station in life of course precluded the possibility of her returning his affection.

He watched every expression of her beautiful features, of her soft blue eyes, every wave of her rich, dark hair, every curve of her exquisite form, and above all every note of a voice as sweet as that of Eolus.

Arville, too, sat by his side and listened to his legendary troubadour songs, given in a clear, rich, manly voice, and accompanied with masterly skill upon his guitar, and she longed to be able herself to play thus charmingly upon this sweet instrument.

"Can I learn to play thus?" she asked, innocently, of Karl.

"Most certainly. A little patience is requisite, but"

you possess every requirement—taste, delicacy of touch, and a desire to learn."

With such a pupil the student spared no trouble or time; he was assiduous, and she advanced so rapidly as to surprise herself.

Twice each day for more than an hour seated by her side—true, generally in her father's presence, now called upon to place her hand in some particular position upon the strings, now to indicate which finger to place upon a certain string, now removing the instrument from her neck to tune it for her, and now replacing it again—ah! it was very imprudent, it was very dangerous for the poor student to be so tempted.

Her sweet breath was often upon his very cheek, so near did his employment bring him to her, and now and then their eyes must meet in explanation and assent.

If thy heart had been made of iron, Karl Gotzten, it must have melted!

The Lord of Onsfeldt saw not, thought not, of this. Secure in the pride of his position, the idea of a music teacher's being intimate with his daughter, the only representative of the proud line from which he had sprung, would have been too preposterous an idea to his mind.

He noted the assiduity of the student, and highly commended it. He saw his daughter's marked improvement and was gratified.

When Karl was not engaged with Arville, her father often sent for him to come to his apartment, where he liked to talk to him; for though a man who now mingled not at all with others, yet his mind had been highly cultivated, he had read and seen much, and the conversation of the young student, fresh from his books and rambles, was grateful to him; while on his part Karl strove to please, and was therefore doubly successful.

Even Arville observed that Karl seemed greatly to interest her father, and she was delighted, because he had led so much the life of a recluse that he seemed often gloomy and miserable.

At last, when Karl's stay had been prolonged until nearly the period when it must close, he had gradually become so domesticated with Lord Onsfeldt and his daughter that there was little ceremony between them.

He came and went at the dictates of his own pleasure, he sat longer each time by Arville's side, his voice grew more and more tender while he addressed her, and sometimes their eyes remained longer looking at each other than they should do. Was it chance or was it their hearts that dictated this?

He was leaving the castle soon—he had told her that he must do so, and a child might have seen that the announcement caused her pain.

And now, as the bright moon shone upon the old castle walls, she often walked with Karl in its broad courts, and chapel "halls deserted," and this evening they had strayed as far as the terraced walk in front of the castle, and while they stood by one of the broad flights of stone steps that led to the flower parterres Arville listened to his ghostly stories, and such tender words as his heart now and then betrayed him into expressing.

"Will you go as you came, Karl, on foot?" she asked.

"Doubtless, Miss Arville, for I had promised myself this tour as much for exercise as for any other purpose."

"But you go by the Coblenz Pass, do you not?" she continued.

"That is my direct route," he replied.

"You will be sure to meet the band of robbers that infest the Pass, I am sure, if you go that way, and then—"

"What, lady?"

"Why, they might kill you."

"It would matter little. You know I have told you that I have no one to care for me, beyond a few fellow-students. I am an orphan, Arville."

"Oh, say not thus, I should—"

"What, gentle Arville?"

"I should grieve sadly for you," she said, with a sigh.

"Would you, dear Arville?"

It was the first time he had been betrayed into so tender an expression of feeling. He looked hurriedly and timidly into her face.

As if to assure herself of his meaning, her eyes met his, and the next moment the proud daughter of Onsfeldt was pressed to the heart of the humble student. Not a word was spoken—their hearts were too full for utterance.

Karl pressed his lips to her fair forehead, and then, drawing her arm within his own, they walked on.

There could no longer be any disguise between them—they knew each other's secret, and they loved deeply and earnestly. Of course they could not but realize that theirs was a hopeless love. In their own

philosophy, they might "lay the sceptre by the shepherd's crook," as old gossips do in their love tales, but stern reality told them that the proud Lord of Onsfeldt had no such fancy, and that he would rather see his daughter in her grave than humbled by an alliance beneath her rank and station.

The police and military at Aix-la-Chapelle were completely at fault. They could find no clue to the headquarters of the robbers of the Coblenz Pass. Rumour said that the band was a small, but very determined one, that they rarely appeared—not more than four or five times in a year, that only the rich and the government trains that conveyed specie were attacked. The policy of the banditti was to dash boldly at the victims, rob them instantly, slaying only when it was necessary to their own safety and self-defence; and then vanish again into the deep woods that flank the narrow pass, and no search had as yet been successful against them. The whole district was under excitement upon the subject, and this it was that caused Arville to tremble for Karl, as she knew that he was to go alone and entirely unattended by the dangerous road.

Karl, for the few remaining days he had tarried at Onsfeldt castle, poured forth his love into the ear of his gentle pupil, and Arville, now that she knew they must so soon be separated, acknowledged in return how dearly she loved the young student. She knew nothing of the world, she had no associates beyond her tutors and the old nurse who had attended her mother in the same capacity years long gone by. It was her first thought of passion; she was young, romantic, and all truthfulness, and she gave Karl the entire wealth of her heart. Perhaps the very hopelessness of their love added intensity to its power.

In a moment, as Karl knelt at her feet one evening in her father's halls and pressed her hand tenderly to his lips, he was doomed to a sad and startling dénouement, to an exposé that rendered them both miserable.

The door was suddenly thrown open and there appeared at the entrance the commanding form of Lord Onsfeldt, with amazement, anger, and uncertainty all strongly evinced in his expressive face. He paused but a moment, during which time Karl recovered his feet and returned his gaze with a sad but undiminished expression, while Arville, blushing deeply, turned away her head from both her father and her lover.

"Karl Gotzten," shouted the enraged father, "what do you at the feet of my daughter? Have you presumed to lift your eyes to her in love, sir, or I am mistaken in my interpretation of this scene?"

"My lord, I will not speak falsely. Introduced to your child by chance, I was too weak to withstand the power of her charms, but not too weak to keep the secret of my devotion for her untold in my own heart; chance revealed to me that she, too, loved me."

"Fine talk," replied Lord Onsfeldt, sarcastically; "well, go on, sir."

"I have told her of my love, and Arville acknowledges that she loves me; but if you suppose that this confession on the part of either was made with any idea of hope in your acquiescence, or indeed of our ever again seeing each other after the lapse of a few hours, then you are mistaken."

"Ay, sir, this is all very well. Know you that I would sooner see that form a corpse than the wife of one beneath her rank! No, sir, Arville is descended from kings and princesses, and so must she wed. I would run a sword through your very heart," continued the enraged father, "but for your youth, and the fact that I myself had been to blame in trusting thee so far. Leave these walls quickly, and thank Heaven that thy life is spared to thee, after such audacity!"

Karl did leave, and at once, bidding Arville a blessing and farewell, and wending his way to Aix-la-Chapelle, he sought lodgings and rest after the continued excitement he had so long encountered. A few days served to recruit him, and as he must hasten back to his humble home in time to take his papers as graduate, from the college, he prepared to start at once. These German students are great walkers, they are well practised in pedestrianism and often make the tour of Europe on foot. It is a healthful and invigorating habit, and now Karl strode forth with his student's pack on his back, with a firm and healthful tread, a ruddy cheek and clear eyes. True, his heart was heavy, though his feet were light.

The scenery was well marked by the young student. He had a quick eye for the beauties of nature, and now they seemed to glow with renewed beauty to his eyes, for though his suit with Arville was hopeless, yet it had opened a new vein of appreciation in his heart, and he seemed to say, as he regarded each new attraction presented by the varying scene, how she would dwell upon that, she would realize and sym-

pathize with his feelings if he could describe this to her. In short, he seemed to see everything now through the eyes of her he loved. Flowers that he would formerly have passed by unheeded were now carefully culled and cherished; he could not see one of her sex without regarding her with renewed interest—in short, Karl was only in love, but he fully realized all those symptoms of it which most of us have been at least once acquainted with.

Karl wended his way from Aix-la-Chapelle steadily towards the Coblenz Pass. He was no coward, his young and athletic frame was capable of much endurance and a stout defence if need be; but then, had he paused to think, which he did not do, that danger lay in his path, he would not for a moment have been deterred from pursuing his proposed route.

He would have reasoned, if he reasoned at all upon the subject, that the banditti molested only those from whom they expected a rich booty, and that they would hardly think it worth their while to attack a poor pedestrian like himself.

While he was musing, not of these things, but on the charms of the daughter of Onsfeldt, a liveried carriage with outriders and attendants, passed him at so quick a pace as to arouse him to the scene about him.

Still he walked on with a firm and steady tread. Not more than a minute had passed when there fell upon his ear the confused sounds of many voices, the clashing of swords and the echoing of pistol shots. His first instinct was to spring forward to the scene of action, which he did at once, as he recollected the vehicle which had but just passed him, and then all at once explained itself—he was now in the famous Coblenz Pass!

The traveller, a personage of high rank, did not hesitate to acknowledge his indebtedness to the student, not only for his own life, but for entire victory over the attacking party, since it was his immediate and opportune services which caused the banditti to fly from the contest.

But little did Karl heed the profuse thanks that were given him, he seemed to be intently thinking of some other matter.

This absence of mind was so obvious that the nobleman attributed it to his wound, and insisted upon his riding forward with him in his carriage.

Finding that he was travelling directly on his own route, Karl now consented to do so, and he hourly grew more and more in favour with his new friend, as he gradually recovered in a degree his wonted spirits.

Finally at parting not only a heavy purse, in itself a little fortune, was forced upon Karl by his generous friend, who persisted in declaring that he owed his very life to him, but he also gave Karl his address, and promised him his official influence at court in any line of profession or occupation which he might choose on leaving college.

The young student thanked his generous friend, and promised, if occasion offered, to appeal to his good offices in his behalf for the future.

When at home Karl lived with an old uncle, who had just enough of means to adopt his nephew and give him a good education.

Having received his diploma of excellence on graduating, he now in a very few weeks found himself thrown entirely upon his own resources; and he was informed by his uncle that as he had now done his duty by his sister's child, and had kept the promise made to her in her dying hour, Karl would henceforth understand that he was to stem the world's current alone, that is, by the aid only of his own exertions.

Thanking his only surviving relative for past kindnesses and making him good promises for the future, Karl packed up his scanty wardrobe, and resolved to seek out the noble lord who had so kindly promised him his interest.

He easily found him, and moreover learned that he was to represent the interests of the King of Belgium in some national matters that required the holding of a court for some length of time at Aix-la-Chapelle.

Lord Holanback received his young protégé with the utmost kindness, was rejoiced to see him, at once attached him to his suite as secretary of the legation and thus placed Karl at once in a high and most honourable position.

In a month from that he found himself established in highly respectable quarters, with the Belgian court uniform upon his person, and a star of rank upon his breast.

Of course Karl Gotzten the pedestrian and Karl Gotzten the secretary of legation were very different looking persons externally, though within his breast there beat the same manly and generous heart as before.

It may perhaps seem strange that he should dare to present himself at Onsfeldt castle, after what had occurred there, but he did so without disguise; and,

what will perhaps still more surprise the reader, Lord Onsfeldt not only received him with courtesy, but even with great cordiality, and freely permitted him Arville's society. True, an observant eye would have detected the evil passion which lurked in the bosom of Lord Onsfeldt, but he openly exhibited none of it—the why was plain enough to Karl. And when, a month or two after, he led the gentle and beautiful Arville to the altar, it was with her father's full consent, and under the countenance and patronage of Lord Holanback.

People wondered, Arville wondered, but Karl did not wonder. He had the secret of Lord Onsfeldt's means of replenishing his exhausted resources, for he was the robber of the Coblenz Pass!

Too proud to bend to fortune, this man had secretly organized a select band, upon the most careful system, and had so conducted his depredations upon rich travellers as to prevent all discovery of his guilt.

Karl had met him as we have seen, in the Coblenz Pass, and had spared his life. The guilty man was now completely in his power, and with exposure staring him in the face, open disgrace and the death of a criminal in prospect, he of course gave way to all else of pride and anger, and consented to bind Karl to his family in a way that would make him share his dishonour if he should ever reveal his secret.

Karl's uncle soon after died and, to the surprise of all, left a fortune well stocked of ample means of support. Karl and his sweet wife knew not the inconveniences of want.

Under pretext of a desire for foreign travel, Lord Onsfeldt went abroad, and there he died. He never intended to return. His career had rendered him, though now reformed in habits, nervous and suspicious, and he survived but a brief period his daughter's marriage, which in every respect proved most happy.

Thus ends the story of the Robber of Coblenz Pass. L. B.

DAISY'S VISIONS.

DAISY BROWN had one pet ambition, over which she pondered and dreamed. She wanted to be a heroine—to do some great deed—to perform some noble action.

Not that she cared to be praised and admired and talked about, for Daisy was a sweet little modest girl of twelve; but that she might feel herself akin to those wonderful boys and girls about whom she read in the histories and story-books.

The little maiden looked upon her own everyday life as a very humble and insignificant affair. There were never any grand catastrophes upon which she could rush as a guardian angel.

All thing proceeded smoothly in her happy, well-ordered home. Even Bridget was contented, and had no sorrow to assuage.

No business calamity ever befell her father, to allow his little daughter to shine like a sunbeam upon his trouble, restoring in some childish way the fortune he mourned.

No cruel gipsy ever came to steal away her baby brother from his cradle, so that the intrepid little sister might follow, creeping stealthily on the track, amid scenes of peril and horror—Daisy's blood would curdle at the very picturing of such a scene—and by some cunning stratagem rescue and bring him back triumphantly to their weeping parents.

And so Daisy was an everyday sort of little girl, instead of a beneficent heroine, very much to her own disgust.

Her friends were, some of them, aware of the feverish aspirations of the little girl, but as she did not, like some others, neglect the little duties lying around her while sighing for some grand employment, they left her undisturbed by reproaches.

One day Daisy had strayed on in the fields, gathering flower after flower, until her hands were full, and, tempted by the berries shining out from their dainty leaves of green, where the darling little dewberry trailed over the soft moss, she entered a wood.

It was such a lovely day, and the sky was so blue and the birds so happy that Daisy could not be sad, even over the lack of romantic incident in her monotonous life.

So she went on into the cool shadows of the wood, her eye bright as stars, her face gay with smiles, and a glad song on her lips. And there she found little blossoms peeping up from green leaves, and her treasures increasing so rapidly she was fain to tumble them all into her apron, and, sitting down to sort them over, she determined to make them into bouquets, one for her mother and one for Annie Nell.

The task was so delightful and Daisy was so still and quiet that a squirrel ventured to descend from the nut-tree beyond, and skip hastily across the

mossy ground, and presently a wee brown rabbit came gliding through the feathery brakes, paused a moment in doubt, aware of the figure there on the mossy hillock, but, after a cautious sniff and grave, investigating glance, went on his way, and Daisy was so intent on her task that she discovered nothing of her shy, dainty-footed visitors.

She did hear, however, when there came a fierce, quick step crashing along over the dry branches lying beneath the trees, and looked up in wondering surprise, for it was very seldom that she was disturbed in those quiet haunts.

It was a gentleman, a stranger to Daisy, and she sat perfectly still, a little alarmed at the fierce glitter of his eye and the deadly pallor of his face.

He did not notice her, but, striding onward, flung himself down upon the ground, and, covering his face with his trembling hands, groaned aloud.

Then he rose again in that same abrupt fashion, pulled out a small rope from his pocket, threw one end over the lower branch of a tree, made a slip-knot, and dropped down again, trembling from head to foot.

Daisy's attentive eyes took in all the movements without the least idea of the man's desperate intentions. But she saw the pale face, and heard the bitter groans and her warm little heart was full of compassion.

She rose softly to her feet, and stepped, noiselessly as a fairy, over the mossy ground, and the first he knew her light touch was on his arm. He turned quickly, and his eye was full of wild terror.

"Are you ill, sir?" asked Daisy, all the earnestness of her generous heart beaming on her face. "I will do anything I can for you."

"Yes," stammered the man, his lips trembling over the words, so that the child could hardly understand them, "yes, I am ill."

"I am very sorry," said Daisy. "Would you like some water from the brook? It is very cool and clear. A little tin cup is there, so I could bring you some."

He tried to answer, but the words would not come, so he only nodded.

Daisy ran as fast as possible, and came back, her sweet face so full of solicitude the man could do no less than thank her as he took the cup. He did not leave a single drop. Daisy looked at the empty cup with satisfaction.

"I'll bring you some more in a minute, sir. I thought you would like it, it is so cool and nice."

"No, dear child, that was enough. Now you may go home," answered he, still all a-tremble.

"Oh, no," returned Daisy, promptly. "I can't go home till you are well again. I'll bring some more water, and wet my handkerchief. Perhaps your head aches! Mamma always bathes mine, and I can rub yours so nicely."

And away she trotted for the second cup of water.

On her return she approached him in the most motherly fashion, and, moistening her handkerchief, she lifted it to his head, which she could reach, because he was sitting down, his back against the tree, and with patient perseverance she bathed and bathed, until at last, with a tremulous sigh, he said: "Thank you, dear. That will do. My head is quite cured now."

"And are you cured everywhere? Are you sure you are quite cured everywhere?" persisted Daisy. He could not answer that question with the truthful eye of Daisy on his face, so he asked another, instead of giving answer.

"What are you doing here, in this lonely wood, such a little girl as you?"

"I have been getting flowers; making a bouquet, you know, for my mother," answered Daisy. "Didn't you get flowers for your mother when you was a little boy?"

What a question for that moment!

"Ah, Heaven have mercy upon me! Yes, child, yes, I did," broke with sobs from his heaving breast. "Oh, if I could only go back—if the world could only be so beautiful again, and I so innocent!"

Daisy did not understand his meaning in the least, but she spoke quickly from the thought the words gave her:

"I don't think the world was any more beautiful then. I'm sure it is as beautiful as can be now. Only look up, and see how pretty the sky looks! And were your flowers handsomer ones than these?"

And she held up the bouquet proudly.

He looked at them wistfully. What visions did they bring to him of his innocent boyhood?

Daisy saw the hot tears brimming in his eyes.

"You may have this bouquet, sir," she said; "you may carry it to your mother."

"My mother! Child, child, she has been in her grave these twenty years."

"Oh," answered Daisy, catching her breath, "no wonder you cry. How I pity you! But she is in Heaven, isn't she?"

"Yes, yes, she is in heaven. She is an angel, if anyone can be," he returned, quickly.

"Then she loves you now, and sees you. Mamma says she believes the angels watch us."

The man shuddered, glanced up at the rope dangling from the tree just over his head, and covered his face with his hands. Dear little Daisy for a moment was quite uncertain what more she could say in comfort, but her compassionate heart was not satisfied to go and leave him yet.

"Mamma says, too, that if we are good, we shall, one day, all of us go to heaven, and find all those who have gone before us. I shall see my baby brother then, and you will have your mother again. And that makes it easier to bear, don't it?"

To her astonishment, she was suddenly seized, and covered with a wild rain of tears and tremulous kisses.

"Child, child, I believe you. My mother watches me from heaven. She sent you to save me. The scales have dropped from my eyes. It is a beautiful world still, and I, who was going to play a coward's part, to shirk a little trouble and perplexity and disgrace, will go back to it, and be a man."

He did not seem to be talking to her now, for, though his hands still held her firmly, his eyes were lifted upward where the deep blue of the sky showed through the branches. That deadly pallor had gone out of his face, a soft flush crept over his cheeks, and the tears had washed away from his eyes that glassy, despairing look of fevered desperation. Daisy was too much awed now to speak, but she held up the flowers timidly. He kissed the hand that offered them, and answered:

"Yes, dear child, I will have the flowers. I will take them to a little girl of mine, and tell her that the generous hand which gave them restores also to her a father's love and care."

He put the bouquet carefully into his coat pocket, the one where the little coil of rope had lain, cut down the rope from the branch, and, with a shudder, flung it far into the underbrush.

Then he turned to Daisy.

The child, without understanding wholly, perceived what new resolution had restored to him the dignity of his manhood, how his form was once more erect, and free from the burden which had weighed it down, how his eyes shone clear and calm.

"Come, my little deliverer, let us go away from here. Let us return home; you, the dear lamb which has never strayed from the safe fold, I, the penitent prodigal, seeking my Father's forgiveness."

At the path which led over to the highway he paused to ask:

"Is that your father's house up above the meadow, little one?"

"Yes, sir; and I must follow up the wall to the lane."

"Good-bye, then. Heaven bless you, my child! Sometime, when you are old enough to understand, you shall know what a good deed you have done today."

And, kissing her again, he put her over the wall, and went himself, with great strides, over the fields toward the highway.

Daisy, with her one remaining bouquet, ran gaily home.

She forgot to tell her story upon her arrival, for she found visitors, and among them a favourite cousin, with whom she was directly exploring the attractions of her baby-house, and busy dressing dolls.

That evening, however, her father called her into his library, out of which a stranger had just taken his departure.

He held out his arms with a playful smile, but there was something bright glistening on his eyelash; Daisy sprang into them, nestling her head against his shoulder, returning his caresses with interest.

"Well, my Daisybud, what sort of a day has it been?" he asked.

"A very nice day, papa. Cousin Nannie and I played all the afternoon long, and we had a picnic for our dolls, and we read from the fairy-book, and, oh, papa, I'm going to spend a whole day at Nannie's house, mother promised that I should."

"Well, pet, that was the afternoon. I'm a little surprised a young lady who has such longings for heroic deeds can find so much pleasure in dollies, though I can't say I'm sorry about it. But Nannie didn't come till afternoon; where were you in the morning, Daisy?"

"Oh yes; why, papa, I'd almost forgotten," returned Daisy, eagerly. "I went down to my brook in the meadow, and then I hunted in the woods for dewberries. And, oh, papa, there was a man there, and he looked so ill—so very ill! and I brought him water and helped him to be better, and then I gave him some of my flowers, and he seemed pleased with me and kissed me ever so many times."

Her father's face was gravely attentive.

"And what else, Daisy? Did you understand it all, my child?"

The grave wide eyes showed him she had told him all her impressions of the scene.

"What else? why, we talked about his mother's being in heaven, and then he threw away a rope, and we came home."

"And you did not know what the rope was for?" Eyes and mouth now were both round as rings.

"Why, no, papa. I'm sure I couldn't think."

"Never mind, then. But my Daisy was a brave, kind little girl. That gentleman has been here talking with me. And when mamma heard the story he came to tell, she made known to me all the wild visions which dance in this little brain about doing good in some very wonderful and extraordinary manner. And she hinted that this same little girl held a rather disdainful opinion of her present sphere of usefulness. So I have called you, Daisy, to tell you of something which you will never forget nor cease to thank Heaven for."

"This poor gentleman had met with a great deal of trouble—some which he could not help and some which he brought upon himself. One false step brought on untold misery; and at last it seemed to him his burden was more than he could bear. He was so very wretched that he formed a very wicked and desperate determination."

"My child, had you not come to him that rope would have executed its deadly mission. Darling, darling, look upon your hopes as blest with richest fruition, for you have saved a human soul from the most terrible of crimes. You have restored to a poor little child the father it needs and loves. Best of all, you have brought back to the Heavenly Father's forgiveness an erring fellow-creature. My little Daisy, put away your unreal dreams of romance, and be glad and thankful over this true and blessed experience!"

He kissed her, with something of the gentleman's solemnity of manner, and Daisy went away to her bed in a tender awe, a sweet content, which she will always remember, and whose gladness was quite beyond even the heroic rescue from robber or gipsy about which she had dreamed so much.

M. J. C.

FACETIÆ.

THE latest instance afforded by a "fond mother" of her son's cleverness is said son's correcting her for saying he was all over dirt. He said the dirt was all over him.

JACK IT UP.

Farmer Holmes (to his Irish cousin): "This is a favourite spot for Jack."

Cousin: "Oh! bedad, that's what I was thinking, for divvie a one of 'em will come out."—*Fun.*

LITTLE BY LITTLE.

Farmer: "Wull, Maaster Jarvis, and how be ye, sir?"

Master Jarvis: "Oh, only just middling! There be a main soigt too much o' me to be all well at one time!"—*Fun.*

MILLIONAIRESSES.

Mrs. A: "Well, good-bye, dear. You must come and see my new dresses from Paris—one charming morning dress, among others, quite simple, and only cost sixty-seven guineas! You'll come, won't you? and tell me what you think of it!"

Mrs. B: "Oh, my dear, I'm no judge of cheap clothing, you know!"—*Punch.*

A GREY hair was espied among the raven locks of a fair friend by a lady. "Oh! pray pull it out," she exclaimed. "If I pull it out ten will come to the funeral," replied the lady who made the unwelcome discovery. "Pluck it out, nevertheless," said the dark-haired damsel; "it's no sort of consequence how many come to the funeral, provided they all come in black!"

THE OCULIST AND HIS PATIENT.—Some time since a lady called upon a celebrated foreign oculist, in order to consult him on account of her eyes, complaining that her power of vision had of late considerably diminished. At a glance the doctor saw that she was a lady of rank and wealth. He looked at her eyes, shook his head, and thought the treatment would require much time, as there were reasons to fear amaurosis in her case. He must advise her, first of all, that, as she had informed him she was residing a considerable distance in the country, she must move into the city at once, and thus enable him to see her frequently, if possible daily. The lady then rented an elegant mansion, moved into the city, and the physician was punctual in his attendance. He prescribed this and that, and thus days ran into weeks and weeks into months. The cure, however, was still coming. The physician tried to console her. One day the patient hit upon a curious scheme, and she waited not long to carry it out. She procured for herself a very old and poor attire, put a hood of a tremendous size upon her head, took an old umbrella and market-basket in her hand, and in these habiliments she visited her physician

selecting for the purpose a rainy day. She had so well succeeded in distorting and disguising herself that the eyes even of a lover could scarcely have recognized her. She was obliged to wait a long time in the ante-room of the physician with many others, who, like her, were seeking relief. At last her turn came. "Well, my good woman, what have you to complain of?" "Very bad eyes, doctor," she answered. He took her to the light, looked into her eyes, but failed to recognize his patient. Shrugging his shoulders, he said, "Your eyes are well enough." "Well!" she said. "Yes; I know what I am saying." "But I have been told that I was getting the a—I forget how it is called." "Amaurosis." "Yes, that is it, doctor." "Don't you let them make you believe any such nonsense. Your eyes are a little weak, but that is all. Your physician is a lunatic!" "An—?" "Yes, a lunatic! Tell him boldly that I said so." The lady now arose, and, in her customary voice, said: "You are my physician; don't you know me?" The face the sage counsellor made is easier to imagine than describe. "Gracious madam," he commenced to stammer an apology, but the lady would not listen to him, and left him indignantly. She never saw the gentleman any more.

TRY THE KISS BEFORE THE BLOW.

LITTLE ones are oft in error,

So are we, my hasty friend—

Proud, rebellious, hot in temper,

Thus we may be to the end.

By the tender love you bear them,

Let your anger kindly slumber—

Oh, be patient with the children—

Try the kiss before the blow.

Look at yonder little fellow,

Full of happiness and glee;

Suddenly he breaks, unthinking,

Some one's precept, it may be.

You are angry; he is sorry—

See his bright head hanging low;

Every gesture begs forgiveness—

Try the kiss before the blow.

Even though the child be reckless,

Disobedient, given to wrong,

Thoughtful care and tender training

Will bear goodly fruit ere long.

Still the frolic, wayward spirit,

Loving counsel then bestow;

Oh, be patient with the culprit—

Try the kiss before the blow.

We, as proud, rebellious children

Even need a Father's care;

Even need His loving mercy,

That the just rod He may spare.

And this same dear, loving Father

To His children here below,

Though so wayward and so sinful,

Gives the kiss without the blow.

M. A. K.

GEMS.

WE require four things of woman—that virtue dwell in her heart, that modesty play on her brow, that sweetness flow from her lips, that industry occupy her hands.

THE haunts of happiness are varied and rather unaccountable; but you will often see her among little children, home firesides, and country houses than anywhere else.

WE should learn that none but intellectual possessions are what we can properly call our own—that all things from without are borrowed—that what Fortune gives us is not ours—and whatever she gives she can take away.

INTERCOURSE with persons of decided virtue and excellence is of great importance in the formation of a good character. The force of example is powerful; we are creatures of imitation, and by a necessary influence our tempers and habits are very much formed on the model of those with whom we familiarly associate.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

BLUE STAIN FOR WOOD.—Powder a little Prussian blue, and mix to the consistency of paint with beer; brush it on the wood, and when dry size it with glue dissolved in boiling water; apply lukewarm, and let this dry also; then varnish or French polish.

NEW RED DYE.—By allowing a few drops of chloride of sulphur to act upon thirty grammes of aniline, the mixture being continually stirred, Hamel has produced a new red dye stuff, which, in ten minutes became solid. This body dissolved in acetic acid with a red colour, and on evaporating this solution to dryness a black, glistening mass is obtained.

Like most aniline dyes, it dissolves in alcohol, ether, and acetic acid.

PERFUMERY.—Lavender water: oil of English lavender 4oz., oil of bergamot 10½ drachms, oil of cloves 5 drachms, attar of roses 1 drachm, origan oil ½ drachm, oil of rosemary ½ drachm, essence of musk 2oz., rectified spirit 10 pints, water distilled 2 pints. Another and much cheaper form: Oil of English lavender 2 drachms, essence bergamot 2 drachms, essence of musk 2 drachms, rectified spirit 16oz., water distilled 2oz., iris 2 drachms. Jockey club: essence of violets 2 drachms, essence of jasmine ½oz., essence of bergamot, 2 drachms, essence of musk, 2 drachms, attar of roses 10 drops, rectified spirit 3½oz., essence of hay, essence of tonquin 3oz., essence of musk 1oz., rectified spirit 8oz.

STATISTICS.

A SUPPLEMENTARY estimate shows that a sum of 10,000*l.* is required in the year ending March 31, 1874, for the purpose of enlarging Dover Harbour.

THERE was received at Melbourne in the year 1871 jewellery valued at 22,466*l.*, of which 9,950*l.* had to pay an import duty of 12½ per cent., and 12,546*l.* of 20 per cent.

THE nitrate of potash trade of Peru has increased wonderfully within the last twenty-five years. In 1848 three vessels were sufficient to supply the demand, while now one hundred vessels are waiting for cargoes at the port of Iquique.

IN 1870, 25,946 tons of oranges and lemons, valued at 211,739*l.* were shipped from Palermo, and in 1871, 31,765 tons, valued at 280,256*l.* Of dried fruits, 504 tons were shipped in 1870, and 1,215 tons in 1871. Of manna, 1,342 cwt. in 1870, and 2,539 cwt. in 1871.

FROM the traffic returns of the Suez Canal it appears that in eleven months of 1872-73 five hundred and seventy-two vessels passed through, against two hundred and eighty-eight in the preceding twelve months, while the tonnage increased at a much larger rate—674,818 tons against 293,362 tons. This gives to the short cut 24 per cent. of all the tonnage passed at present between India and Europe and America.

MISCELLANEOUS.

WHILST excavating among the ruins of Muchelney Abbey some beautiful tessellated pavement has been discovered.

As a souvenir of his visit, the Shah's favourite horse—the tail particularly—in jewelled trappings, and his dog Akmed, have been painted by orders of MacMahon. Both subjects "sat" several times for the artist.

THE magnificent collection of ancient armour purchased by the Emperor Napoleon III. from Prince de Soltykoff is still exhibited in the restored chateau of Pierrefonds. These objects will now probably be purchased by the French nation.

MONUMENT TO POPE CLEMENT XIV.—A monument has been unveiled in the University of Naples, bearing the inscription:—"To Pope Clement XIV., who, by the bull of the 21st of July, 1773, dissolved the Society of the Jesuits, the University of Naples dedicates this monument."

THE Corporation of London have, it is said, agreed to pay the Dean and Chapter of St. Paul's 20,000*l.* for a portion of the land fronting the Cathedral. It is intended to remove the railing some distance farther back, and so materially widen the thoroughfare.

THE Shah of Persia, during his stay at Paris, asked the French Government to permit him to appoint the French General Augereau his Minister of War. He especially stated on the occasion that he preferred a French General to an English or a Russian officer, on account of the disinterested relations of France to Persia.

THE members of the various naval clubs in the metropolis have assumed the initiative with a view of collecting sufficient funds wherewith to present His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh with a testimonial befitting his exalted rank on his approaching marriage. A committee has already been formed.

ANOTHER LARGE TUNNEL.—The projected tunnel through the Rocky Mountains, already begun, promises to be the chief of all engineering wonders of the world. The Box Tunnel astonished people in its day, but in future the Mont Cenis tunnel itself, the length of which is more than seven miles, is to be looked upon as a mere nothing. The Rocky Mountains Tunnel is to be twelve miles long, and there will be 6,000 feet of earth and rock, or considerably more than a mile, over its greatest depth. The expense will naturally be enormous, but it is hoped that not only will most of the western railway traffic be drawn through this "short cut," but large mining profits will accrue incidentally.

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

SELIMA.—Writing very fair, but too much of a scrawl. **FLORA.**—Not legibly. But the thing is done often enough.

R. F.—We cannot return rejected communications in any case.

J. T. (Abington).—1. By order of any bookseller. 2. At any Italian shop or general warehouse.

A GREAT READER.—Order in the usual way from any bookseller or send stamps to the office.

REUBEN.—Your wishes are easily gratified. Visit the Zoological Gardens any Sunday in the year.

J. C.—Meerschaum is a mineral product, got chiefly in Austria. See Dr. Ure's pamphlet on the express subject.

MAUD H.—1. Elderflower ointment is the best. 2. Use violet powder. 3. Depends on the state of the health. 4. Use a decoction of rosemary, and cut it frequently.

MILLIE.—We are sorry to hear what you allege. If your friend in London is sincere, that is all. You must consult your own heart—both your inclinations and your reason.

A POOR MAN.—Any chemist would supply you with some wash which would be useful for your purpose; though we fear there is some difficulty in the business.

DESPERANDUM.—1. Your friend must indeed have been sublimely ignorant. Aristotle is the greatest of the great philosophers; and we think most people are aware of that fact. 2. Leave the matter alone.

J. M.—1. Correspond in the usual manner, according to our column. 2. To make the hair grow; cut and wash it frequently and use the henna pomade. 3. The handwriting might assuredly be improved considerably.

X. X.—The Duke of Brunswick was killed at Quatre Bras, in 1815. His followers, the Black Brunswickers, wore these funeral ornaments in memory of their leader, the fine but obstinate old gentleman who invaded France, precipitated the death of poor Louis XVI. and finally died at Jena.

ANNIE.—We cannot solve your very unpleasant difficulty regarding the alleged coldness of your lover. As for changing that singular position of affairs, your own feminine heart must best direct you. Why not ask him at once the reason of the suspected change in his sentiments? That would be the most honourable and the wisest and also the most satisfactory course. Beyond this we cannot advise you.

INQUIRE.—Nepenthe was a drink among the ancients supposed to banish the remembrance of grief. It seems greatly to have resembled the modern chlorodyne. Homer, in the *Odyssey*, describes Helen as administering a soothing dose of this highly estimable fluid to the filial, the chaste and the united Telemachus. We presume that the results were on the whole of a beneficial kind. Sedatives of this sort have been frequently employed.

W. E.—It appears from the researches of Dr. D. J. Macgowan, of Shanghai, that the medical virtues of fish oil as a cure for lung complaints was known to the Chinese many centuries ago. But instead of cod-fish, they take the oil from the shark. Acting on this hint, our apothecaries may perhaps be saved the necessity of sending to Newfoundland for their supplies, as the waters of the Hudson, Connecticut, Chesapeake, and other rivers, will afford an abundance of the medicine.

ALICE.—Cracknels are small brittle cakes or biscuits made by first boiling and then baking paste. To flour 1 pint add a little grated nutmeg, the yolk of two eggs, 2 or 3 spoonfuls of rosewater and cold water sufficient to make a paste; then roll in butter 1 lb. and make it into shapes. In one hour put them into a kettle of boiling water and boil them until they swim, then throw them into cold water; take them out and when dry bake them on tins. The cracknels of the shops contain less butter and no rosewater.

JACOBUS.—October 1, 1864, there occurred the great calamity at Erit, caused by the explosion of about a thousand barrels of gunpowder, containing a hundred pounds each. The buildings of Messrs. Hall were blown to dust, and the embankment in front was thrown with great violence into the Thames. The explosion was heard and felt at Charing Cross, a distance of fifteen miles. Five men were known to have been killed on the spot, five other were missing, presumably killed, and three died after removal to Guy's Hospital; those seriously injured amounting to twelve. The coroner's jury returned a verdict of "accidental death."

DOUGLAS.—The most ancient families in England are not necessarily those connected with the Peerage, though of course many of them stand so connected. The houses

of Lytton, Pusey, Swinburne, and Courtenay are the very oldest. The family of Pusey inherits land by virtue of the Pusey born given by Canute the Dane. The family of the Lyttons is likewise of great antiquity. That of Lord Say and Sele is the most ancient in the Peerage. The family of Courtenay is the finest probably in Europe. Always they have produced great and gallant men and exquisite, charming, fascinating women. The Courtenays were, in truth, earls in Normandy, earls in England, and for some short season they occupied the Byzantine throne of the Cæsars. See Gibbon in his "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire."

C. F.—It would require a dozen volumes at least to expound with anything like adequate care the subject of what you term "Plato's teachings." Presuming from your remarkable query that you are unable to read the pure, sweet, and sonorous original, we must refer you to the next best step. The translations in Bohn's series are a faithful reflex of the exquisite teaching of the immortal author. See Prof. Blackie's "Doctrine of the Beautiful according to Plato," a profound exposition of the Platonic model, and one, moreover, couched in graceful and genial English. The philosophy of Plato had its weak points; all human systems have that infirmity. But it had its own high and splendid merits. Unlike Newton, Darwin, and other crawling philosophers, Plato renders things as proceeding from a Divine Source. He never began to build toward Deity from the most minor elements. No! he let down a compassionate chain that served nobly to link together the Divine with the human, the Creator and the creature. We may add that Platonic notions concerning ideas as real existences was the great prevailing distinction between the philosophy of Plato and that of Aristotle. The Stagirite was a most practical man, and he tried to know, learn and love everything. These great men have coloured all modern thought, and our clerical folks have added nothing.

THE HUMBLEST COT.

It was a little cottage home,
Beside a little wood,
No turret high, no shining dome
Above its thatched roof stood;
Yet 'twas a place
Where love's pure grace
Poured forth its healing flood:
Through all the darkest storms of life,
Through sunshine and through shade,
Apart from mad ambition's strife,
It beautified the glade;
It was the seat
Of pleasures meet,
Of joys with peace allied.
No rustling satins there were heard,
No silken-soft footfalls;
No costly paintings ever stirred
With life its spotless walls;
Yet beauty's own
Light ever shone
Within its humble halls.
The hearts that beat beneath its roof
To virtue's e'er were true;
From wrong and shame they kept aloof,
And shunned temptation too;
They clung to right
In life's full light,
And kept heaven's hope in view.
It was the shrine of pure content,
A haven sure of rest,
And not beneath heaven's armament
Stood cot more sweetly blest;
For wrong or sin
Ne'er entered in
That place a welcome guest.
Oh, rich ones of the earth, think not
That wealth alone can buy
True joy; for oft in humblest cot—
The humblest 'neath the sky—
Are comforts found
Which ne'er are found
In mansions proud and high.

C. D.

MOLLIE. twenty, fair complexion and dark hair, would like to correspond with a handsome young man who must be loving and fond of home.

CORNELIA ELEANOR. twenty, tall and slender, with blue eyes, brown hair, and a very fair complexion. Respondent must be a tradesman, and about twenty-five.

POLLY. twenty, tall, dark, domesticated, wishes to correspond with a gentleman, tall, fair, good looking, a mechanic, and fond of home.

S. S. N. seventeen, fair, good looking, and domesticated. Respondent must be tall, dark, and must have a little money; a grocer's assistant preferred.

JOSEPH G. medium height, light blue eyes, fair, affectionate and fond of home. Respondent must be fair, loving, domesticated, and of a lively disposition.

ELLEN. twenty, fair, of a lively disposition, and a domestic servant, would like to correspond with a steady young man.

VENETIA. twenty-eight, a domestic servant, of dark complexion, pretty, and possesses money. Respondent must be about her own age.

AMOS K. nineteen, tall, good looking, and fair complexion, wishes to correspond with a young lady, tall, dark, affectionate, and of musical tastes.

SARAH C. twenty, slender, fair, pretty, and domesticated, wishes to correspond with a young gentleman about her own age; a grocer preferred.

HAPPY TOM. twenty-one, light hair and eyes, affectionate, possessing a good income, and fond of children. Respondent must be pretty, domesticated and good tempered.

BINNACLE JACK. a seaman in the Royal Navy, twenty-four, light hair, blue eyes, and considered good looking, desires to correspond with a young lady, who must be loving and thoroughly domesticated.

TILLY. seventeen, fair, medium height, a loving disposition, and domesticated. Respondent must be about twenty, good looking, dark, and fond of home and children.

HEARTYARN. twenty, 5ft. 5in., seaman in the Royal

Navy, educated, affectionate, and of amiable disposition, wishes to correspond with a young lady about twenty, loving, and domesticated; a dressmaker preferred.

WALTER. twenty-one, 5ft. 5in., dark, good looking, and of a loving disposition, wishes to correspond with an affectionate young lady, fond of music, and about his own age.

AMIN S. eighteen, medium height, fair complexion, bright blue eyes, golden hair, and considered very pretty. Respondent must be tall, dark, handsome, about twenty-one, and fond of home.

CHARLES L. twenty-two, tall, dark, and good looking, with the expectation of 500l. annually. Respondent must be about twenty, loving and thoroughly domesticated.

CLAUDE. twenty, medium height, brown hair, hazel eyes, and considered good looking. Respondent must be fair, good tempered, and affectionate; a mechanic preferred.

AMICK L. a seaman in the Royal Navy, twenty-two, 5ft. 6in., dark brown hair, and blue eyes. Respondent must be about twenty, good looking, of a loving disposition, and domesticated; a nursemaid preferred.

BESSIE. twenty, tall, rather fair, well educated, fond of music and good tempered, wishes to correspond with a tall, fair gentleman about twenty-five, fond of home and children.

MABEL. nineteen, 5ft. 3in., dark-brown hair and eyes, rather dark complexion, desires to correspond with the young man, with dark, curly hair, dark complexion, good looking, and must occupy a good position.

DARLING NESSA. sixteen, fair complexion, considered pretty, domesticated, and of a loving disposition, wishes to correspond with a tall, dark gentleman, not more than eighteen.

MALCOLM. twenty-four, dark, loving, fond of home and a clerk in a government office. Respondent must be about twenty-four, medium height, pretty, and domesticated.

M. A. L. a domestic servant, fair complexion, dark blue eyes, loving and domesticated. Respondent must be good looking, affectionate, and a mechanic by preference.

J. R. W. twenty-seven, rather tall, brown hair, dark blue eyes, of a cheerful and loving disposition. Respondent must be fair, affectionate, domesticated, and fond of music.

SOPHY A. eighteen, fair complexion, blue eyes, of a loving disposition, and domesticated. Respondent must be tall, dark, affectionate, and fond of home; a tradesman preferred.

FANNY S. seventeen, tall, blue eyes, brown hair, and considered pretty. Respondent must be of medium height, light hair, fond of music and dancing, loving, and in a good position.

CONNECTING GEAR. twenty-one, a seaman in the Royal Navy, medium height, and considered good looking. Respondent must be good looking, of a loving disposition, and thoroughly domesticated.

JOHN W. D. twenty, 5ft. 3in., a mechanic, dark complexion, curly hair, and of musical tastes, desires to correspond with a young lady about nineteen, pretty, loving, domesticated, and musical.

CHARLES C. twenty-three, 5ft. 5in., fair complexion, light-brown hair, blue eyes, loving, and fond of home, and a mechanic. Respondent must be nineteen, tall, and affectionate.

SECOND COURSE. twenty-three, a seaman in the Royal Navy, 5ft. 3in., educated, loving, and fond of home, wishes to correspond with a lady about twenty, good looking and thoroughly domesticated.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

ROSE J. is responded to by—"F. J." twenty, fair, and considered good looking.

MAGGIE MAY by—"Telegraph," who thinks he is all she requires.

ALEX M. by—"Beatrice," twenty-three, fair, thoroughly domesticated and thinks she would suit him.

EDWIN C. by—"Alice S." tall, dark, good looking, domesticated, and a tradesman's daughter.

JOSEPH by—"Alice M." eighteen, good tempered, thoroughly domesticated, and considered good looking.

RATTLER THE BEEFEN by—"Alice," fair complexion, dark curly hair and eyes, loving and domesticated.

NELLY by—"Alex," eighteen, a compositor, tall, dark, and thinks he is all that she requires.

MAUD by—"P. M." twenty, 5ft. 7in., dark brown hair, fair complexion, considered good looking, and in a good position.

LOVELY NELLY by—"Fred M." twenty-one, dark, 5ft. 10in., good looking, very affectionate, and gentlemanly.

BEN BACKSTAY by—"Beatrice," eighteen, fair complexion, light hair, blue eyes, loving, domesticated, and fond of music.

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